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(54) **SUBSTRATE TRANSFER EQUIPMENT AND
HIGH SPEED SUBSTRATE PROCESSING
SYSTEM USING THE SAME**

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H01L 21/677 (2006.01)

H01L 21/687 (2006.01)

H01L 21/67 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **H01L 21/67742** (2013.01); **H01L 21/68707**
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Y10S 414/141 (2013.01); **Y10S 901/30**
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CPC H01L 21/67196; H01L 21/67742;
H01L 21/67745; H01L 21/68707

USPC 414/217; 294/213
See application file for complete search history.

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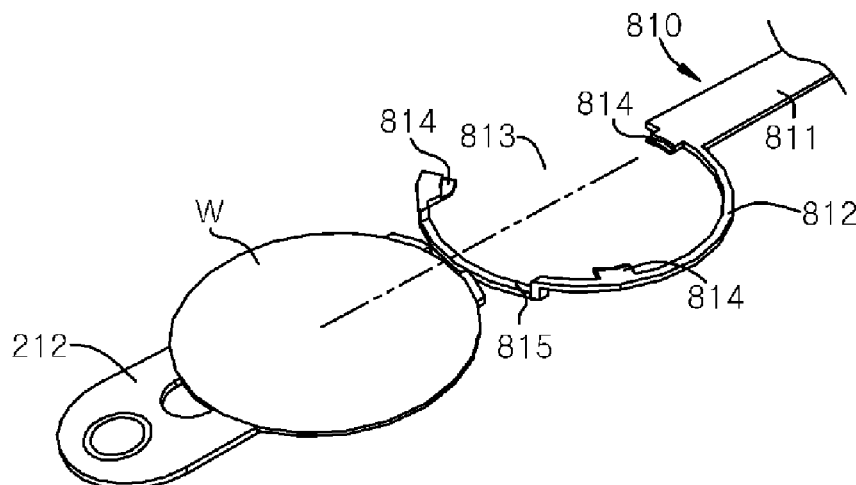
Primary Examiner — Scott Lowe

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

There are provided a substrate transferring apparatus for continuously loading/unloading a plurality of substrates in and from a process chamber to reduce time spent on transferring the substrates and to improve productivity and a substrate processing system using the same. The substrate transfer apparatus is installed in the transfer chamber and transfers substrates between first and second process chambers which is positioned lateral sides of the transfer chamber and a load rock chamber. The substrate transfer apparatus includes a driving unit to supply a rotational force, a spindle connected to the driving unit, first swivel plate arms to load/unload substrate to/from first process chamber, and second swivel plate arms to load/unload substrate to/from second process chamber. Since substrates before and after being processed are rapidly exchanged during the simultaneous or continuous process of plural substrates, processing rate increases and overall productivity can be increased.

31 Claims, 22 Drawing Sheets



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Page 2

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Fig. 1

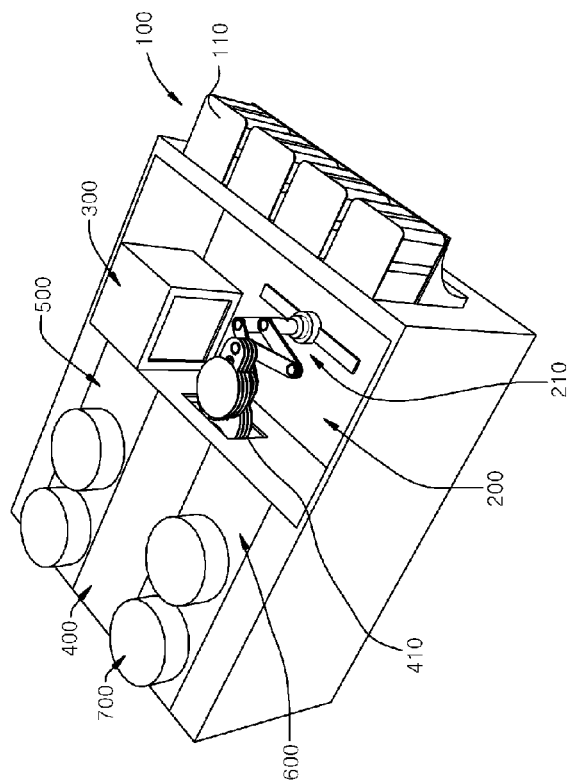


Fig. 2

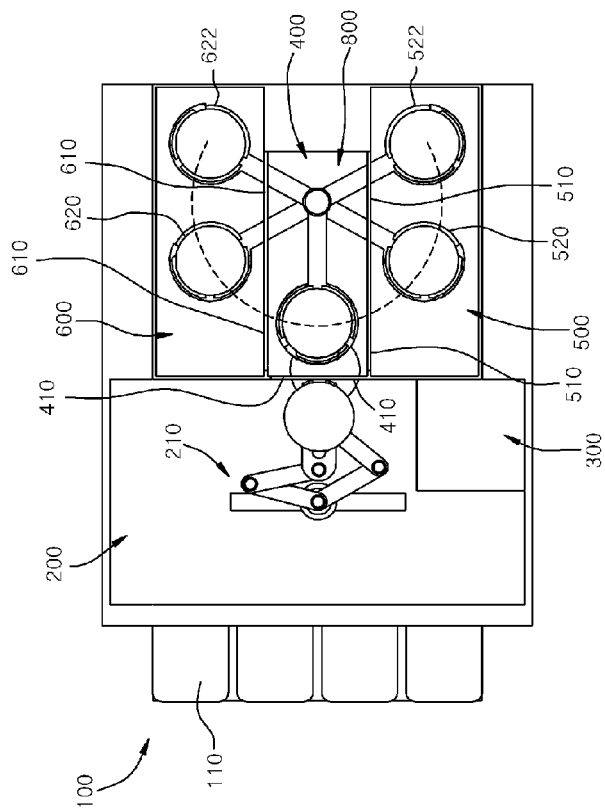


Fig. 3

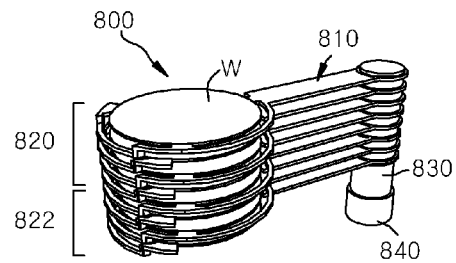


Fig. 4

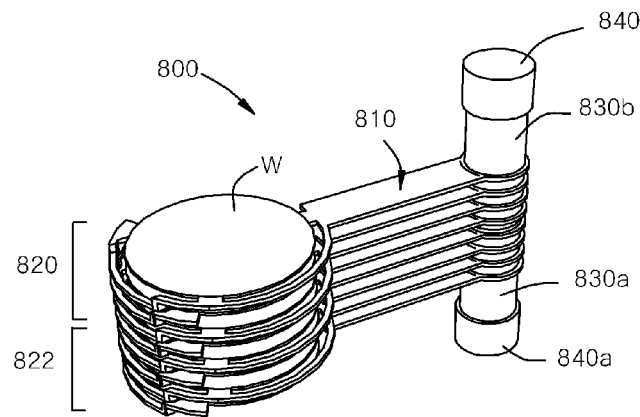


Fig. 5

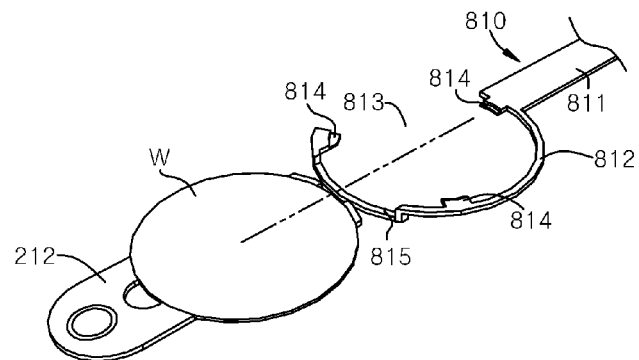


Fig. 6

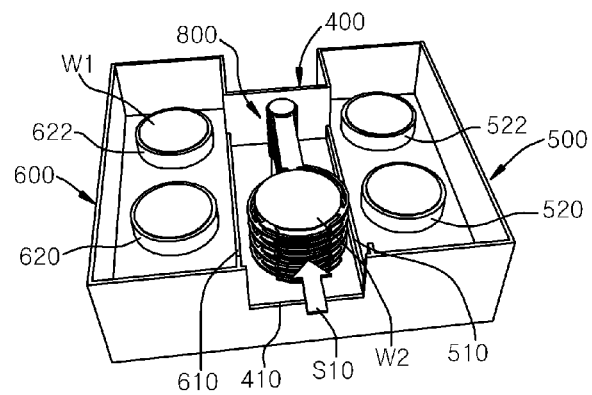


Fig. 7

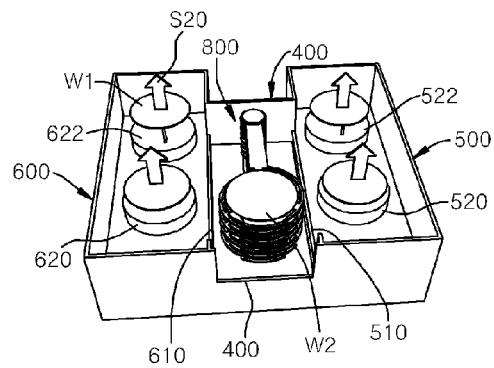


Fig. 8

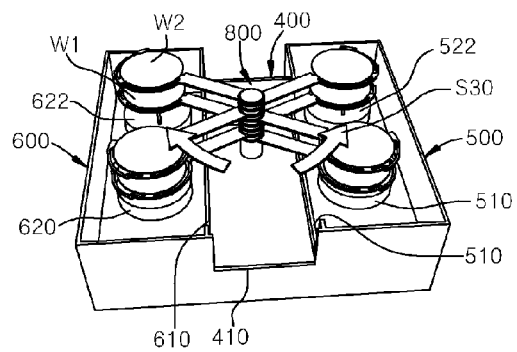


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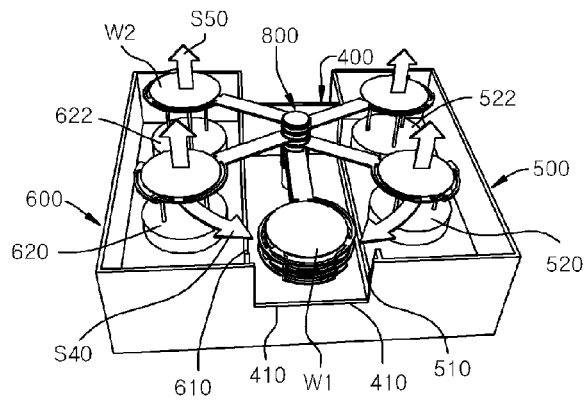


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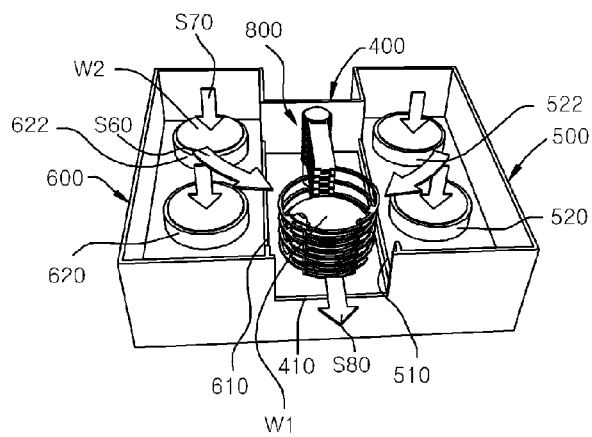


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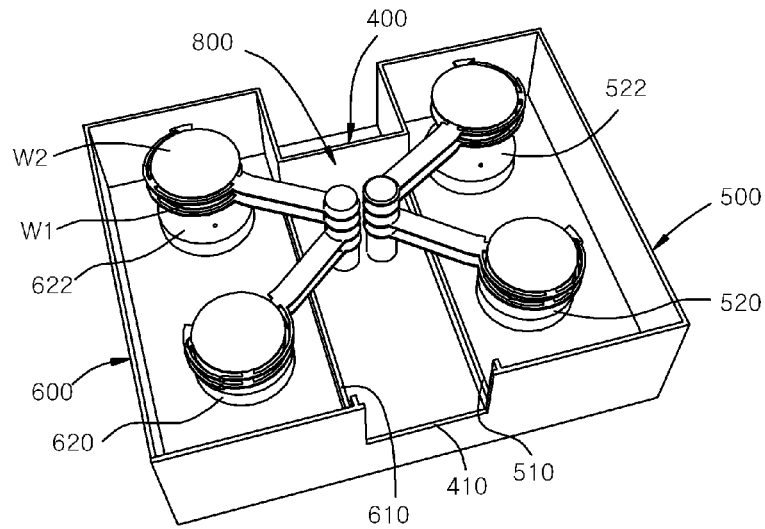


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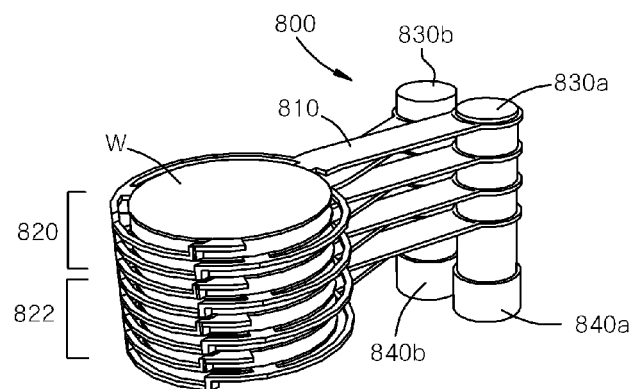


Fig. 13

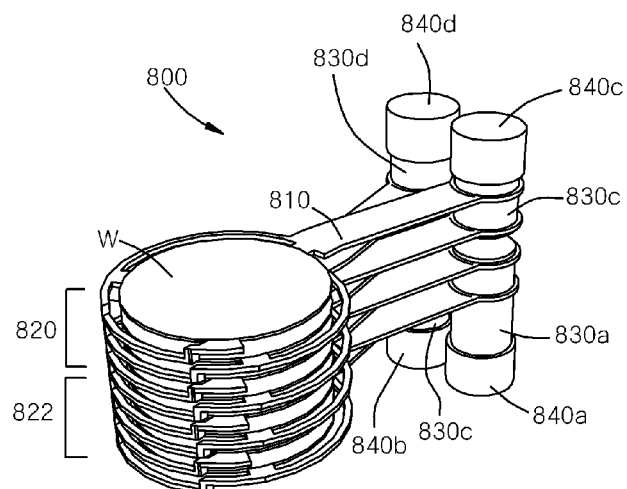


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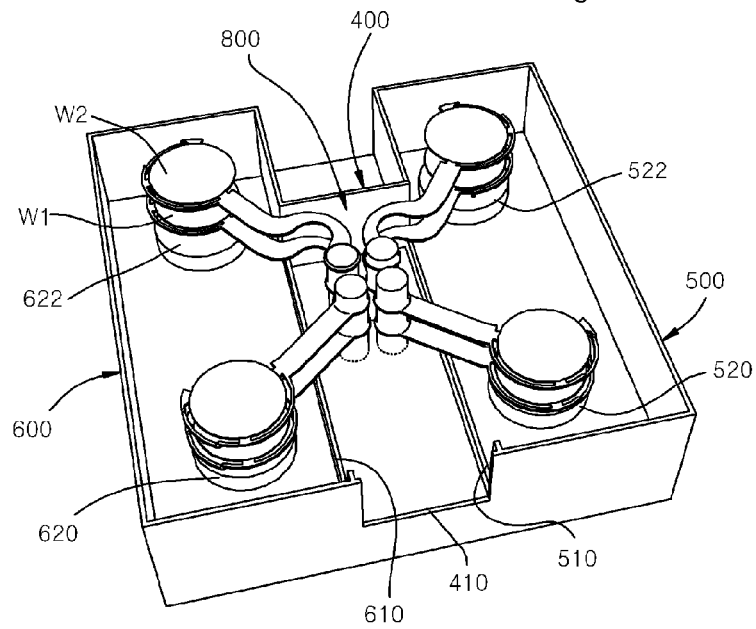


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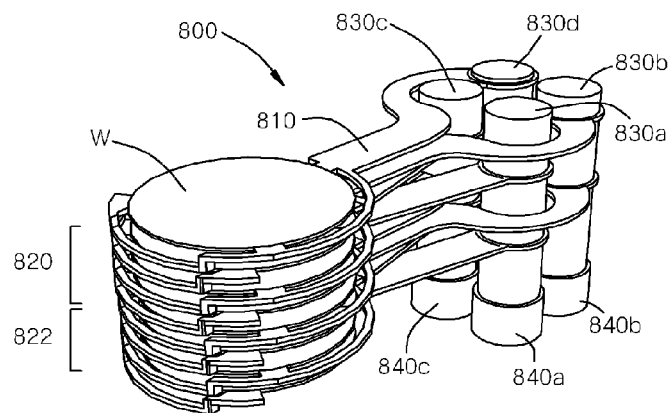


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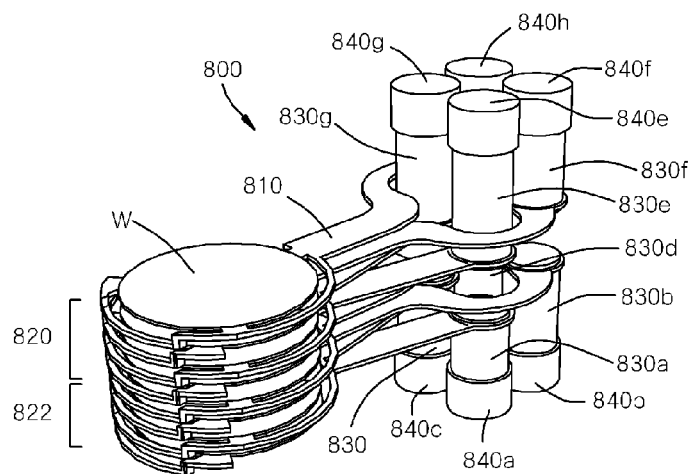


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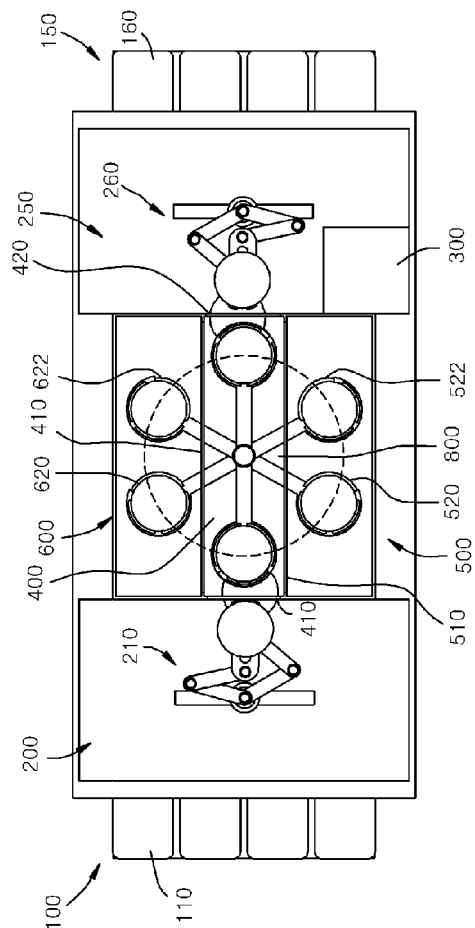


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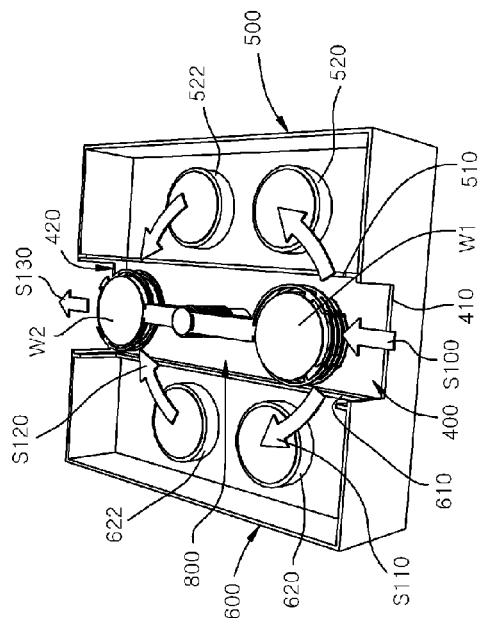


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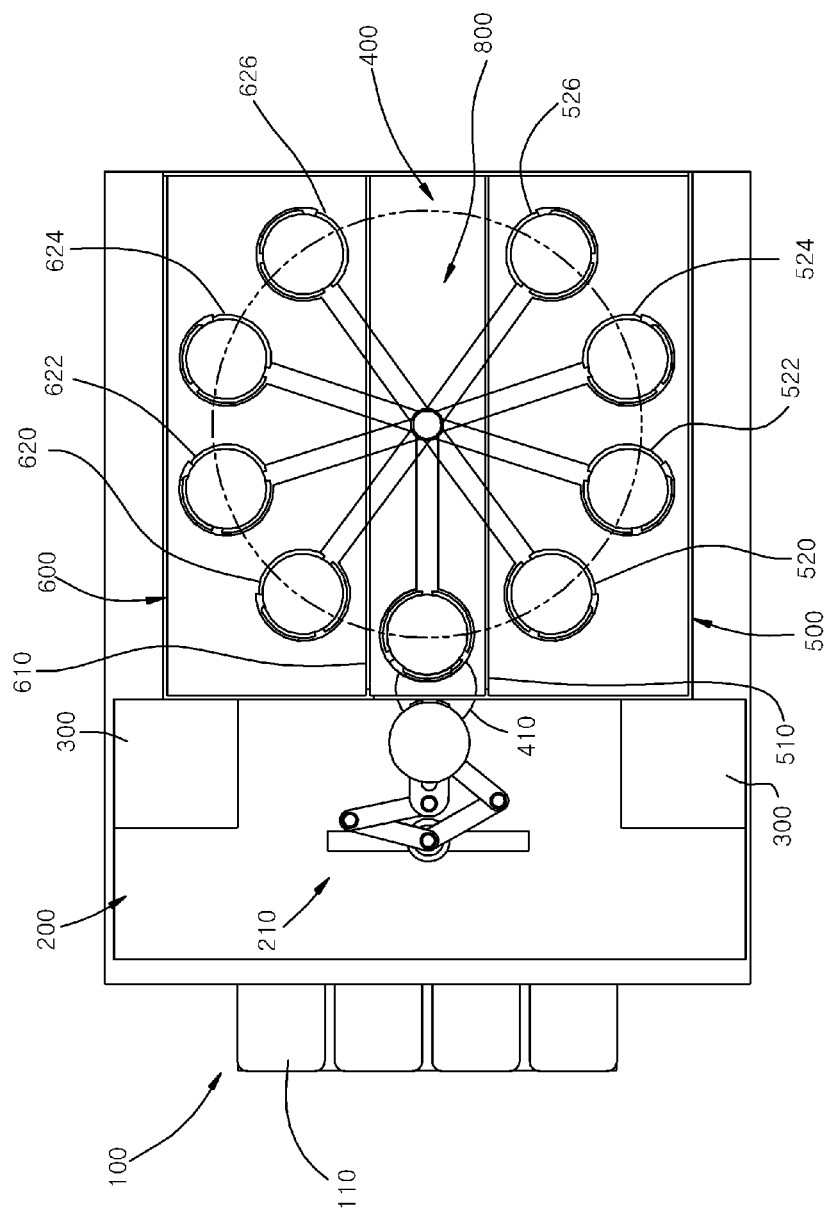


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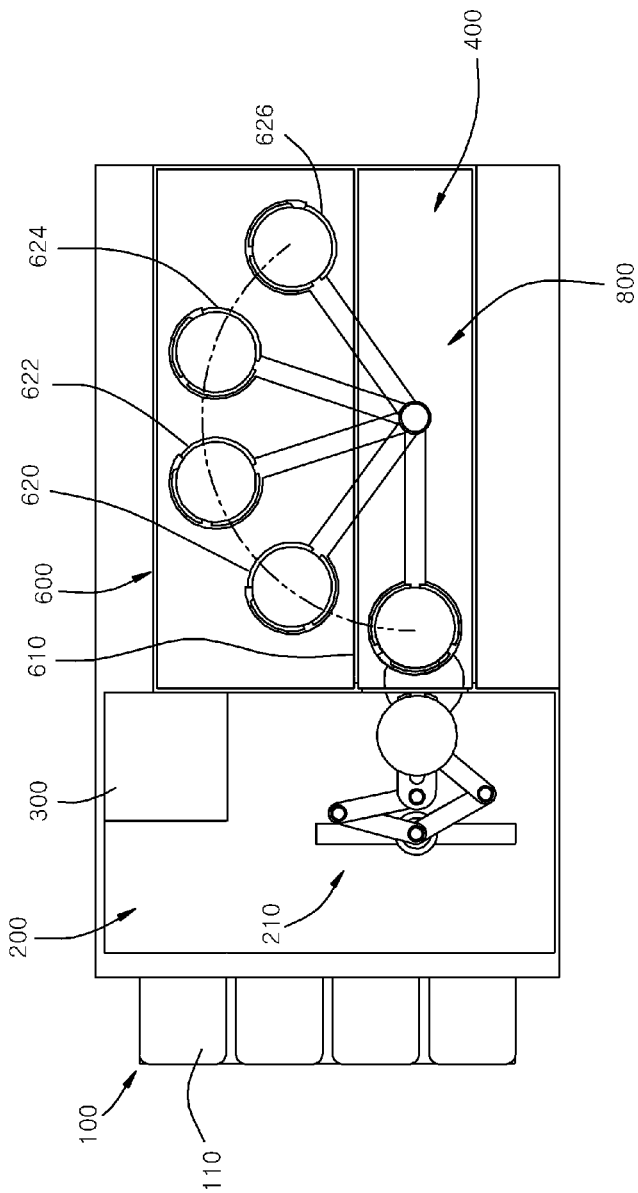


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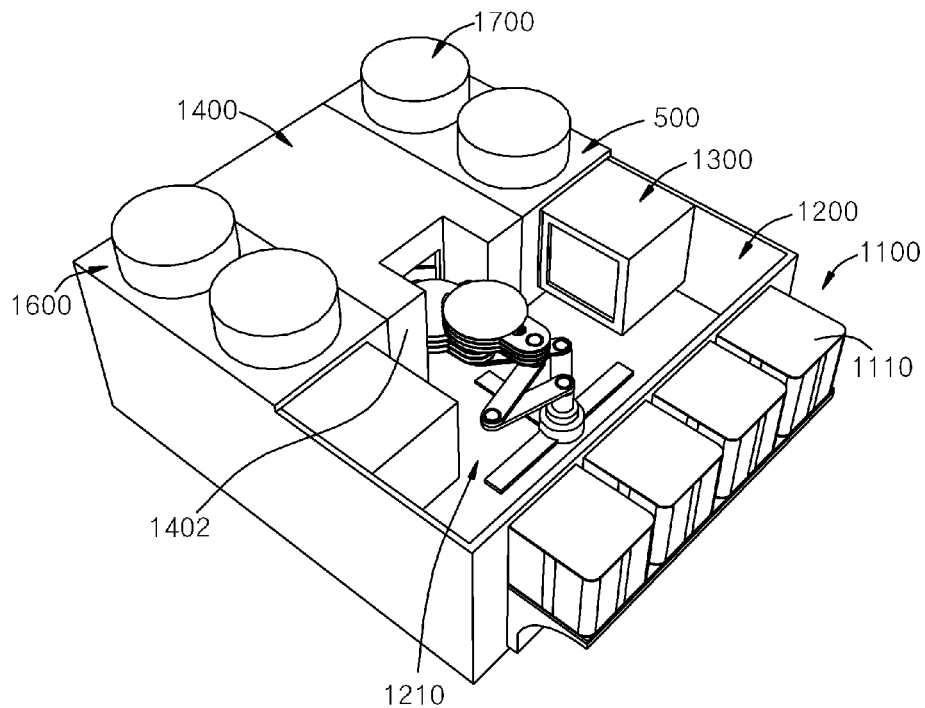


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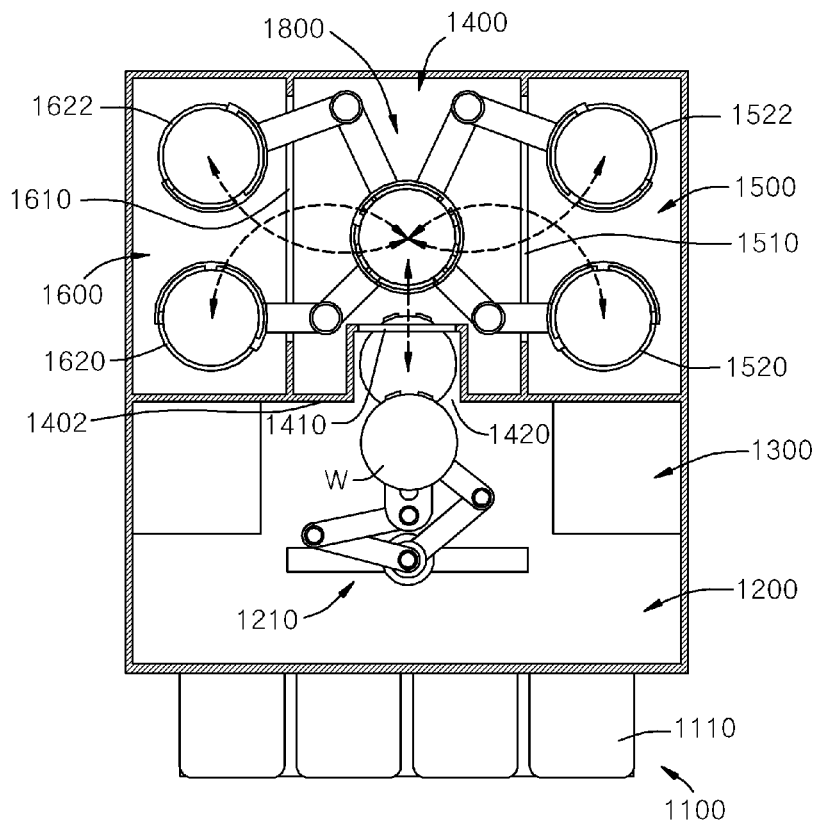


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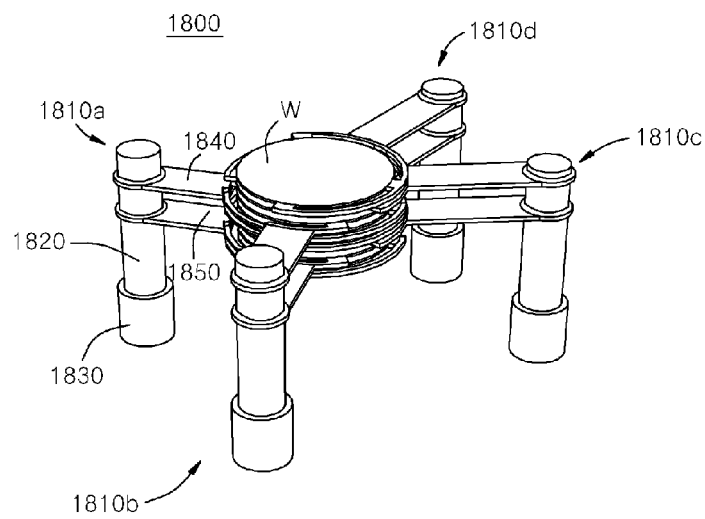


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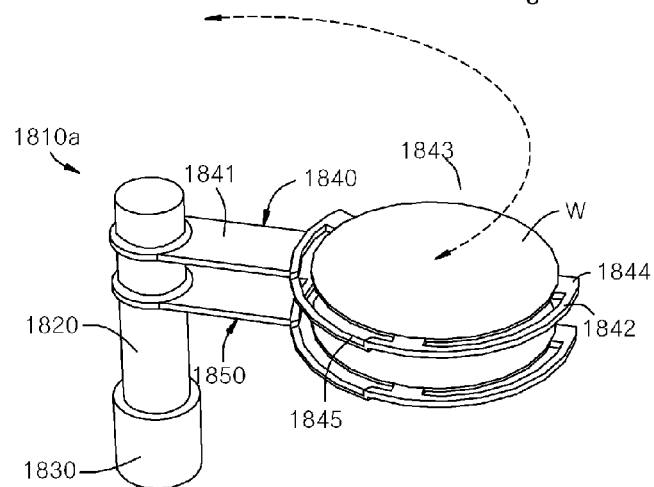


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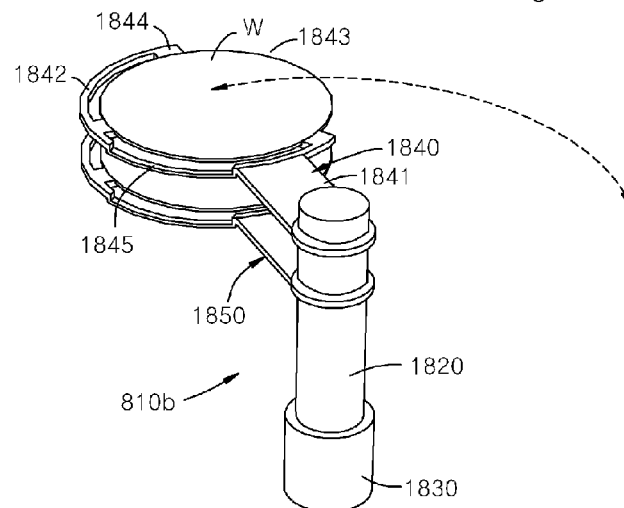


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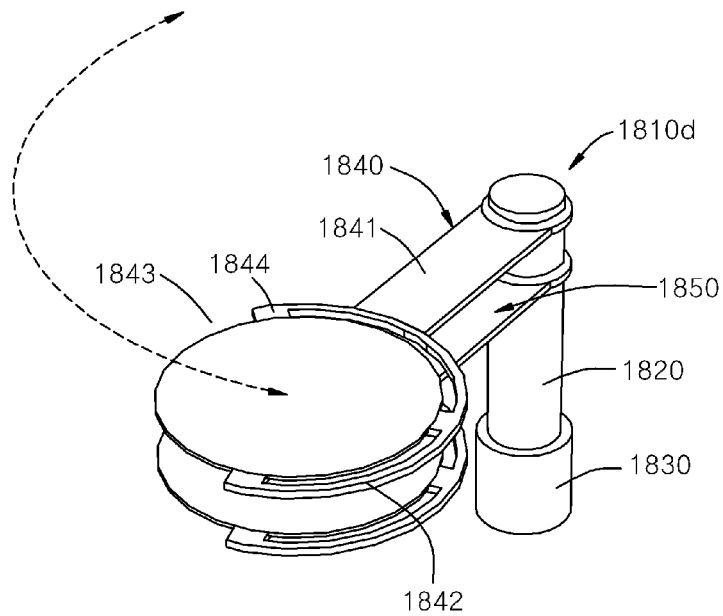


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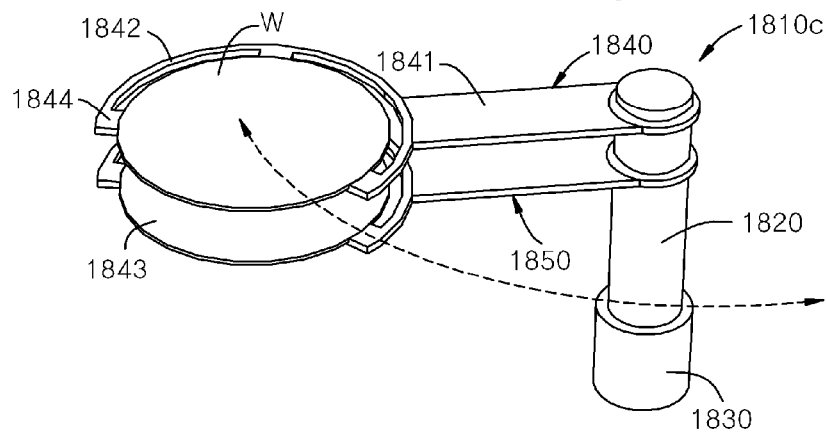


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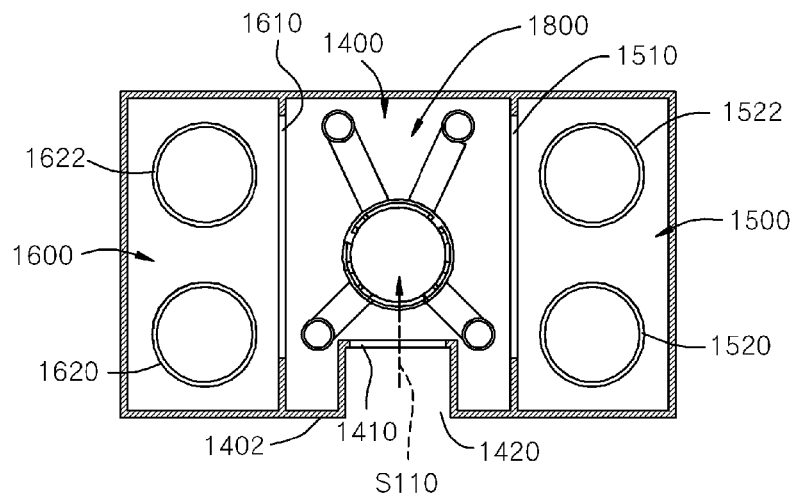


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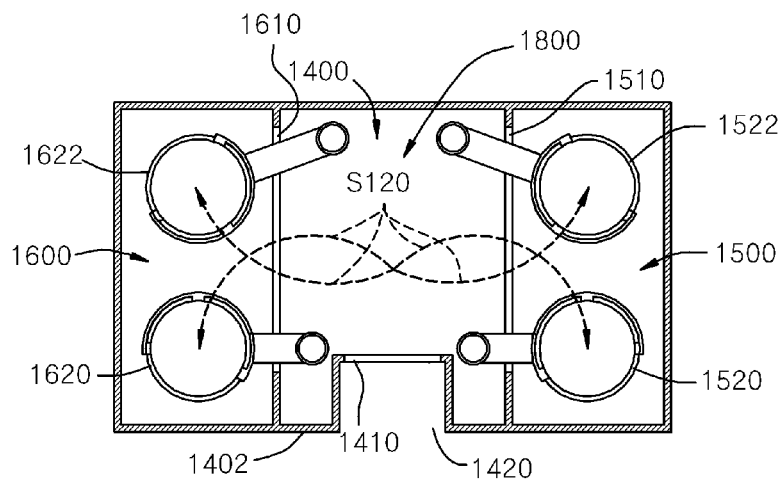


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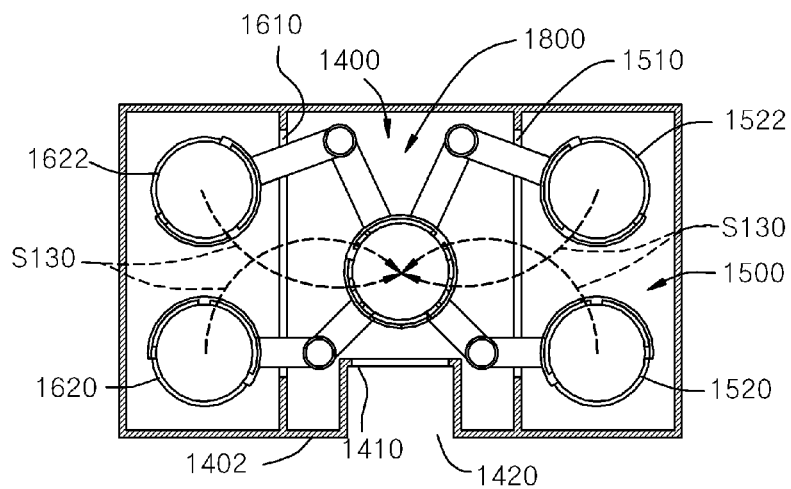


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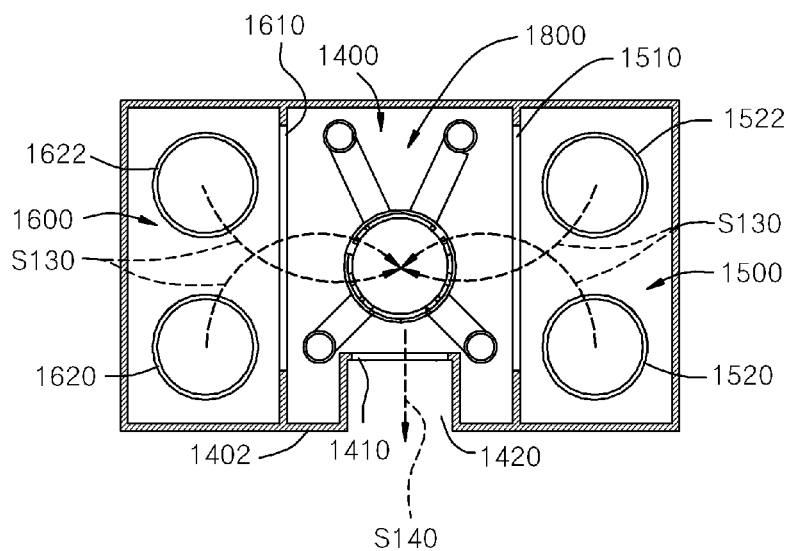


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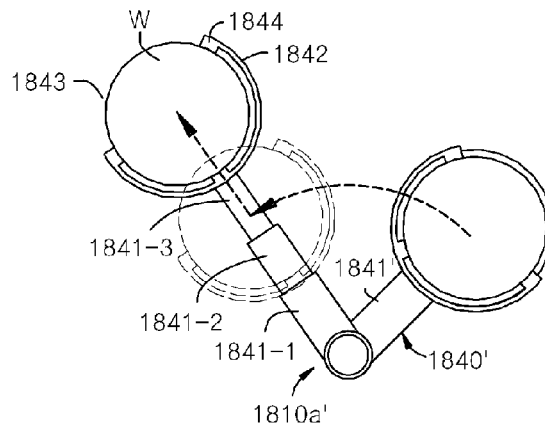


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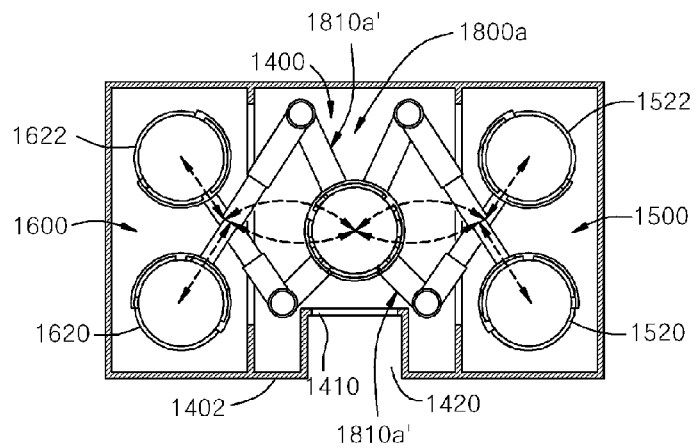


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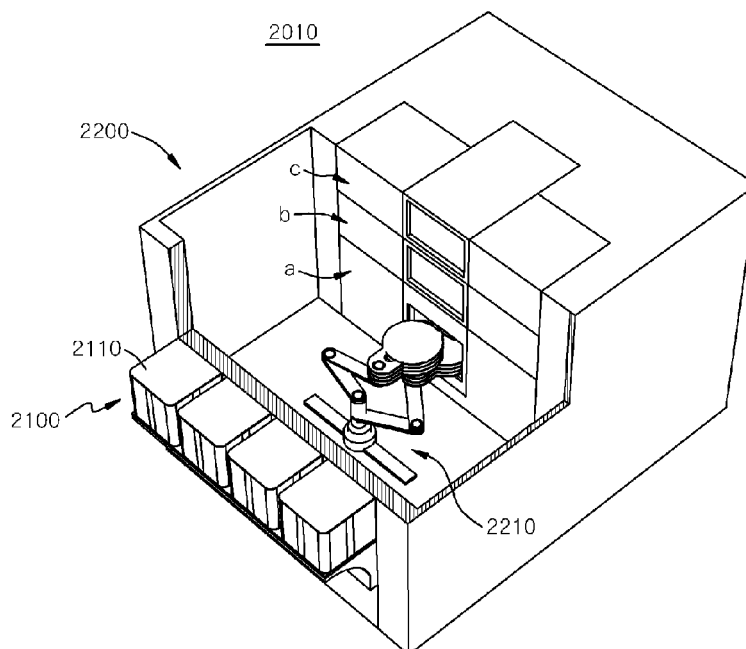


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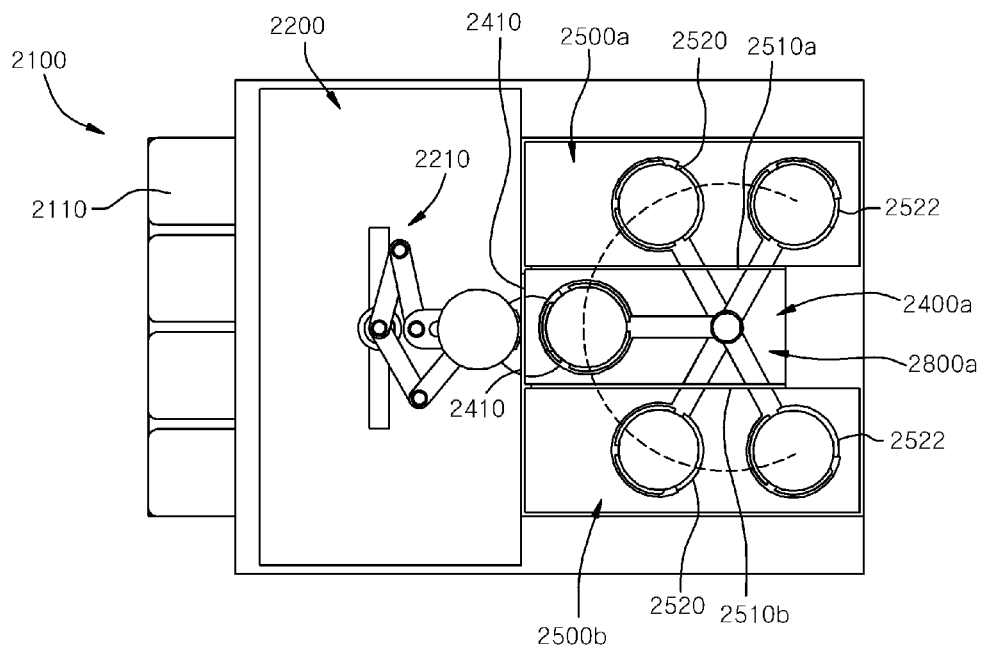


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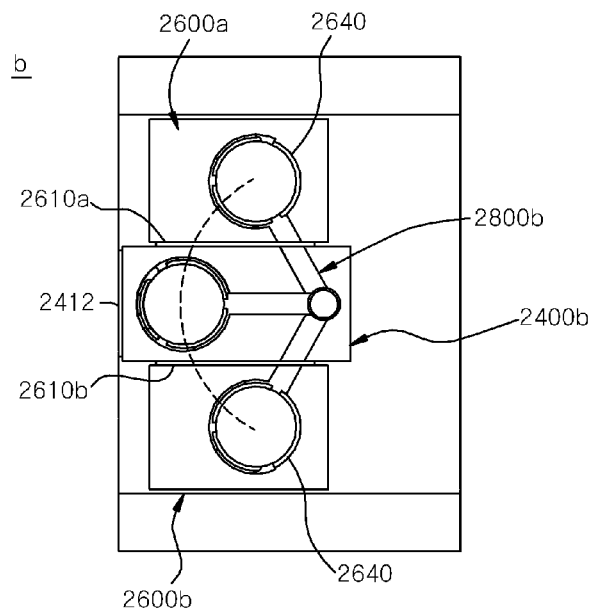


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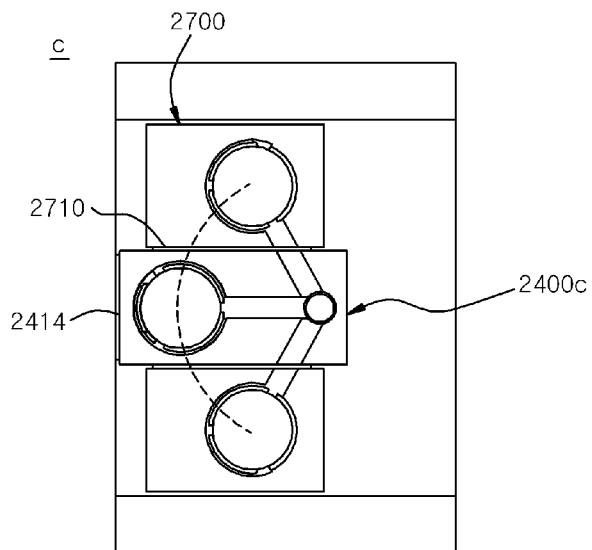


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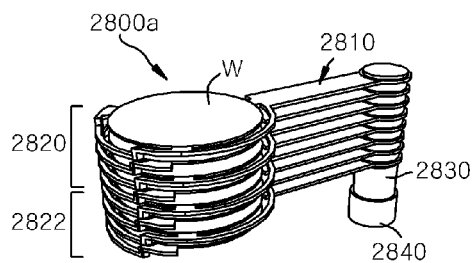


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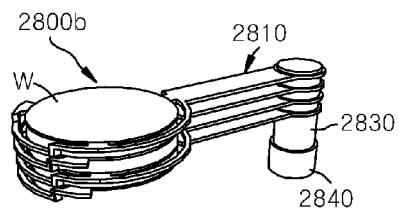


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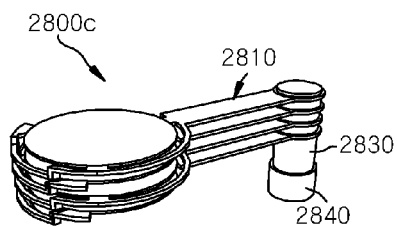


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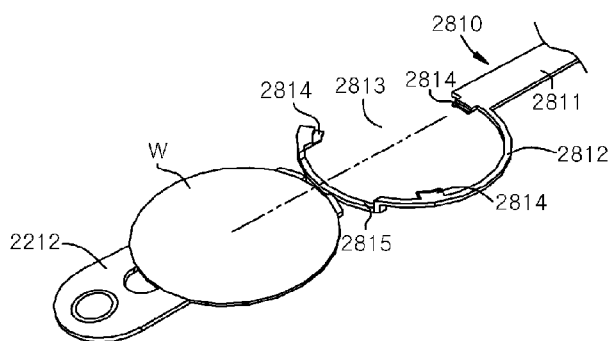


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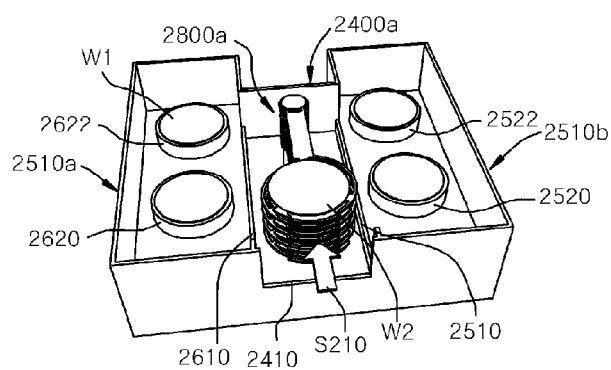


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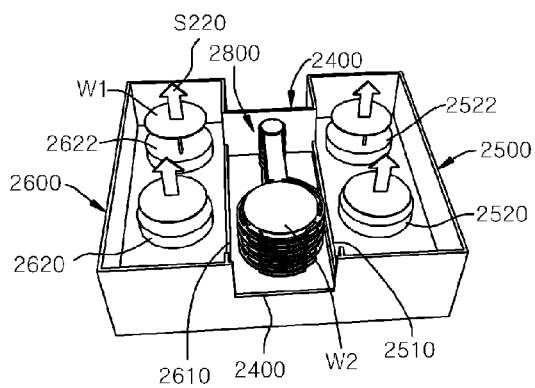


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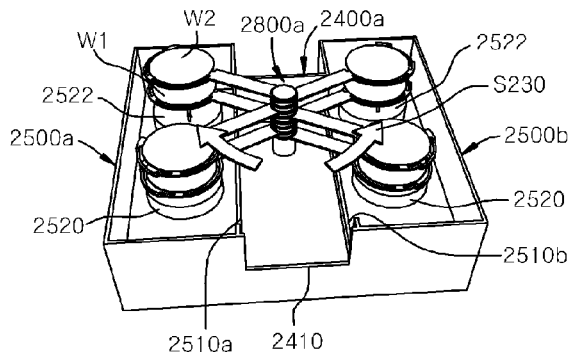


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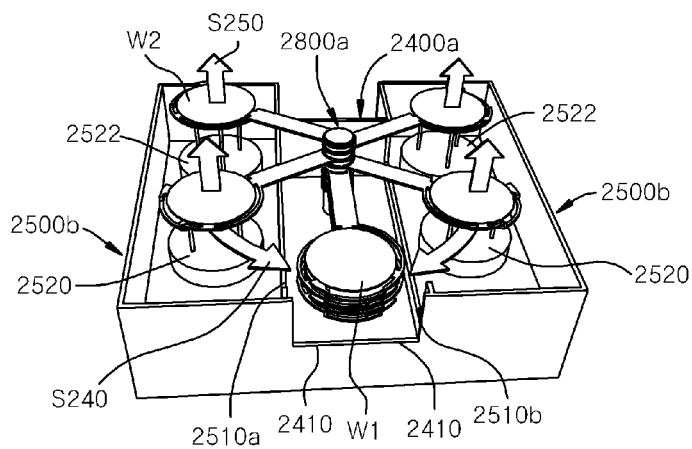


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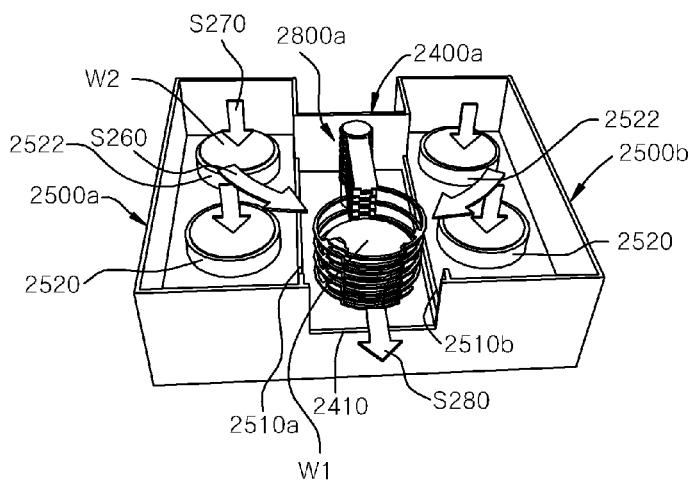


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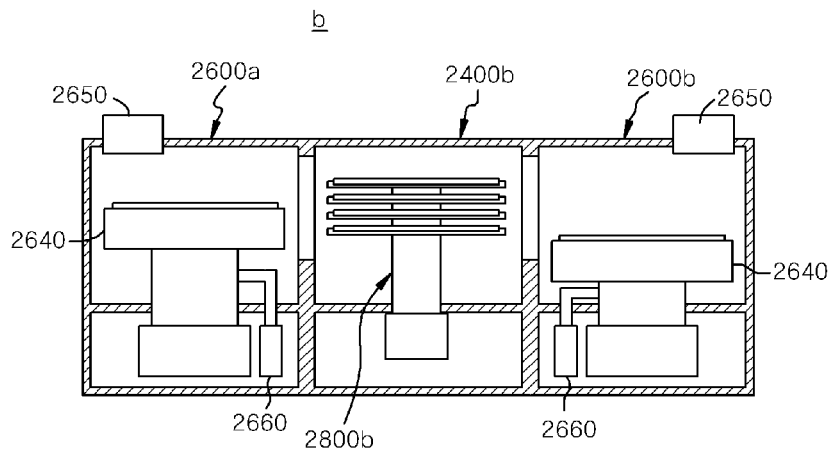


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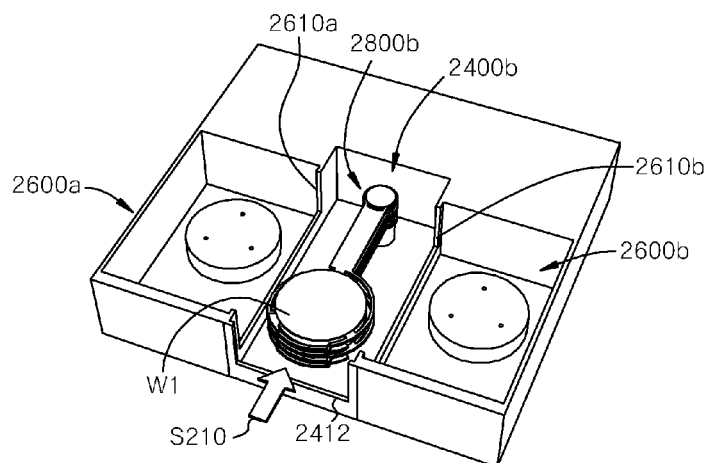


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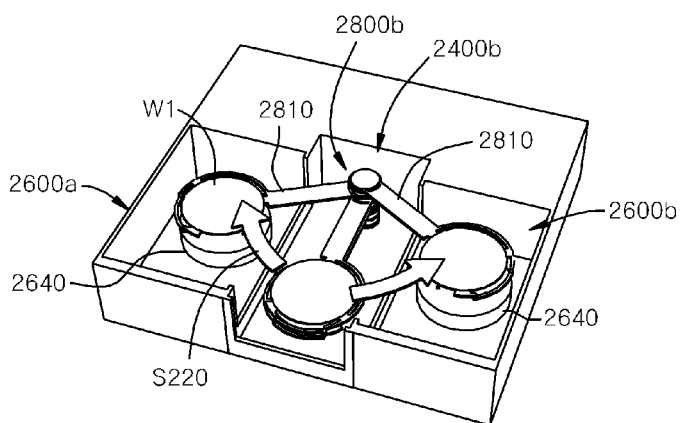


Fig. 50

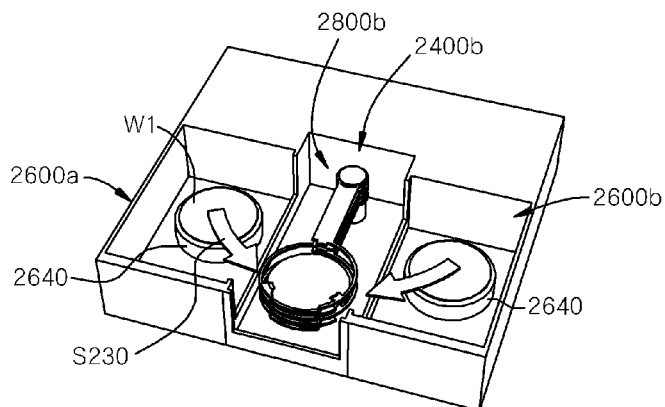


Fig. 51

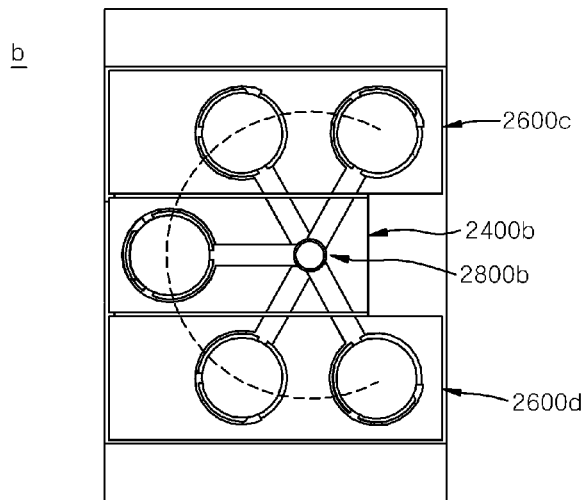


Fig. 52

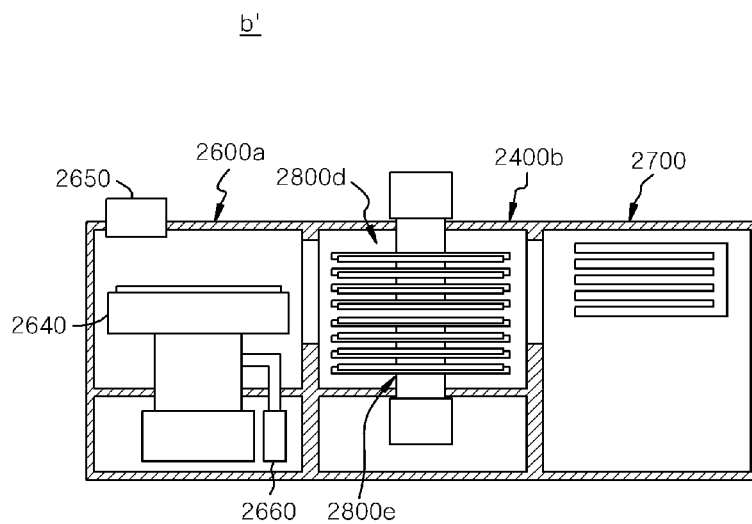


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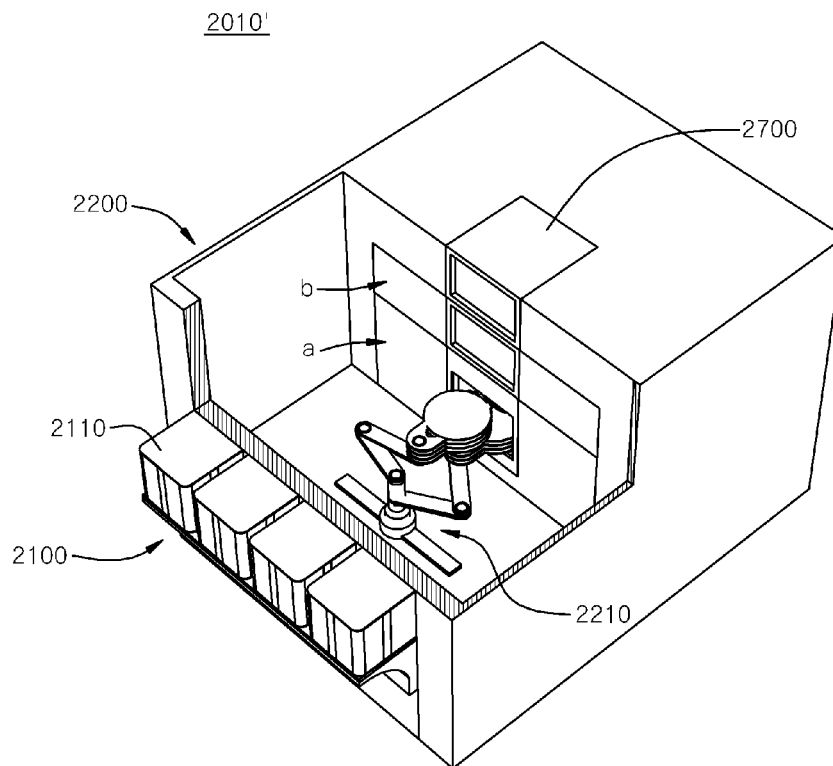


Fig. 54

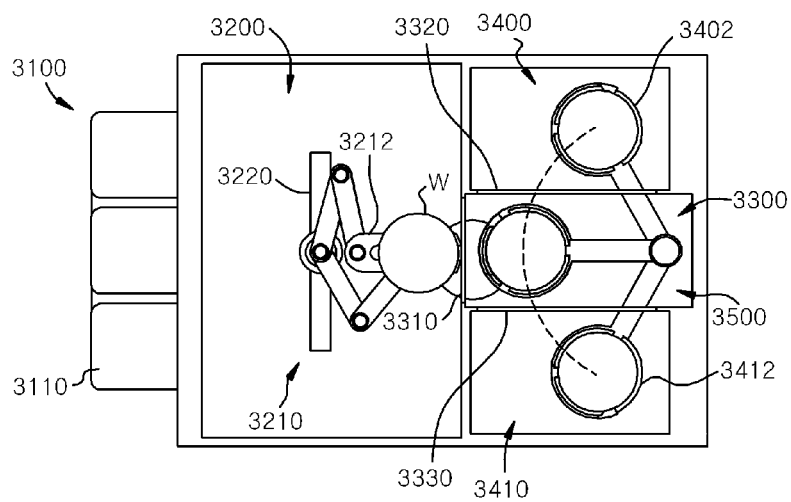


Fig. 55

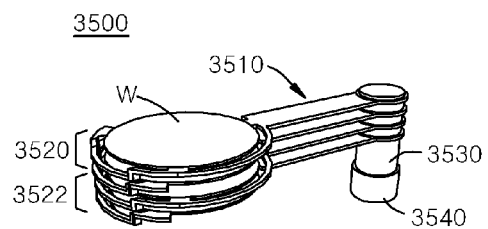


Fig. 56

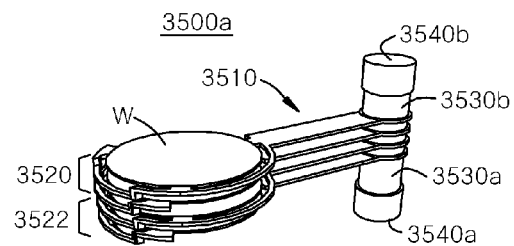


Fig. 57

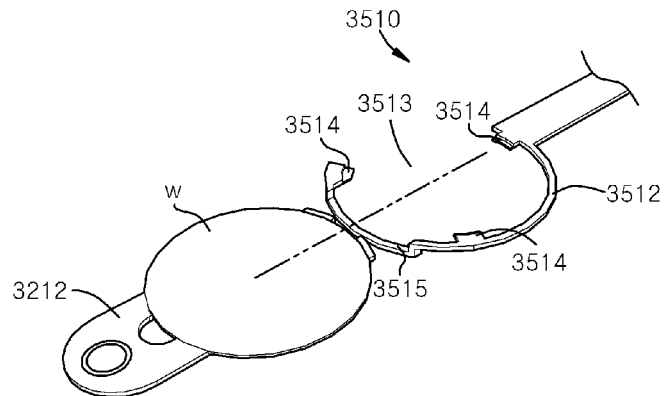


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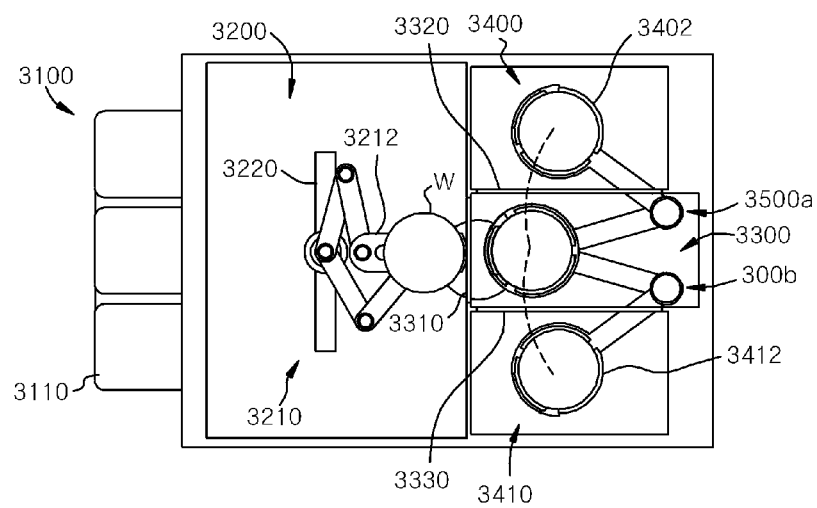


Fig. 59

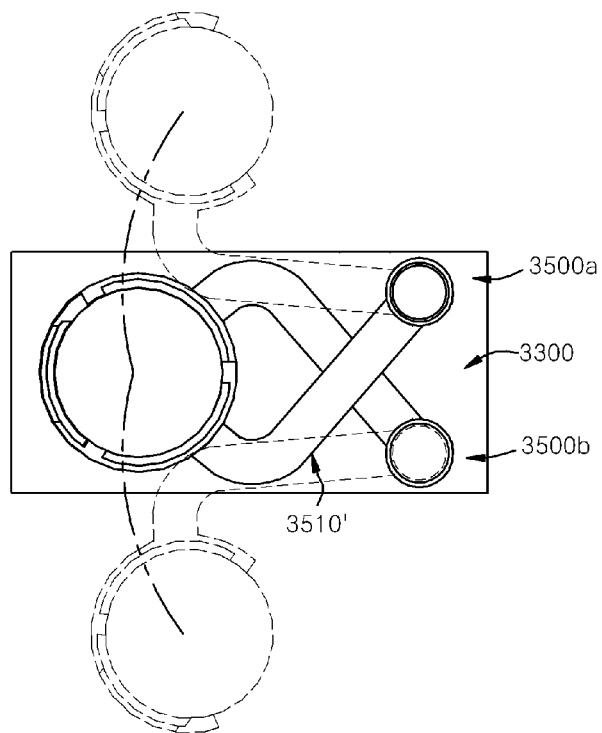
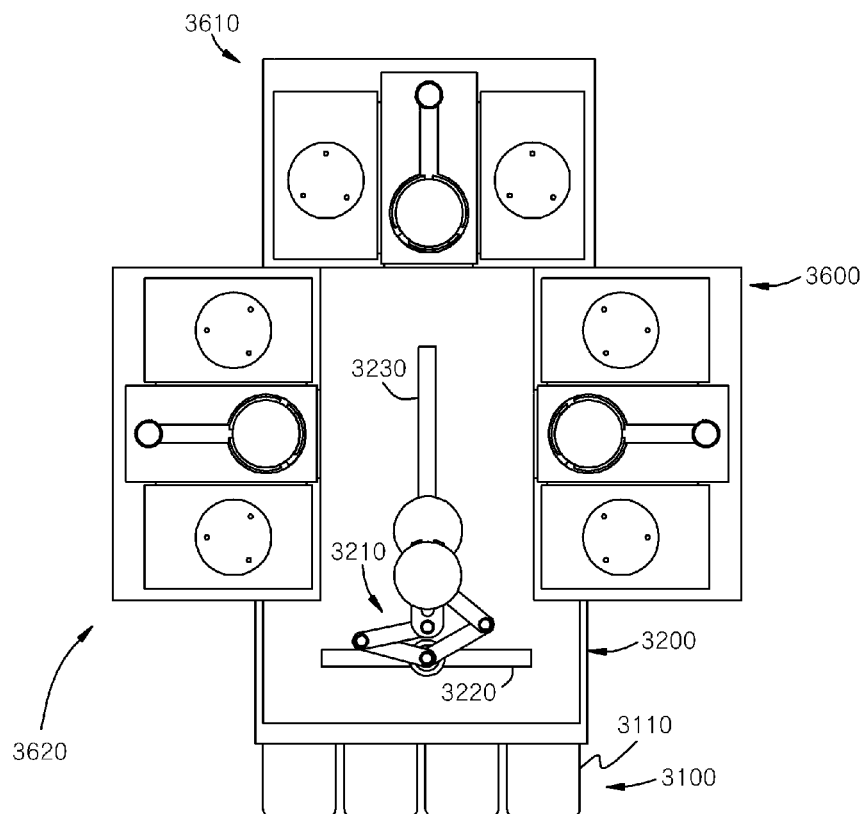


Fig. 60



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SUBSTRATE TRANSFER EQUIPMENT AND HIGH SPEED SUBSTRATE PROCESSING SYSTEM USING THE SAME

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a substrate transferring apparatus and a substrate processing system, and more particularly, to a substrate transferring apparatus for continuously loading/unloading a plurality of substrates in and from a process chamber to reduce time spent on transferring the substrates and to improve productivity and a substrate processing system using the same.

BACKGROUND ART

Recently, a cluster system capable of simultaneously process a plurality of substrates is commonly employed in substrate processing systems for manufacturing liquid crystal displays, plasma panel displays, and semiconductor devices.

In general, the cluster system refers to a multi-chamber type substrate processing system including a transfer robot (or a handler) and a plurality of substrate processing modules provided around the transfer robot.

The cluster system includes a transfer chamber and the transfer robot provided in the transfer chamber to be freely rotatable. Process chambers for performing processes of processing substrates are mounted to the sides of the transfer chamber. Such a cluster system simultaneously processes a plurality of substrates or continuously performs various processes to increase an amount of processing substrates. In order to increase the amount of processing substrates, a plurality of substrates is simultaneously processed in a single process chamber to increase the amount of processing substrates per unit time.

However, although the plurality of substrates is simultaneously (or continuously) processed in the process chamber, when substrates before and after being processed are not effectively exchanged in the process chamber, loss of time is generated.

Moreover, when a conventional cluster system includes a hexagonal transfer chamber (basically, including four process chambers and two load lock chambers), due to the area occupied by the transfer chamber, the area of the cluster system and the width of the entire cluster system that is important to the arrangement of the cluster system in a manufacturing line increases more than a desired width and the scale of a vacuum system required for maintaining the transfer chamber in a vacuum state increases, so that apparatus cost and installation cost increase. In addition, the area of the transfer chamber more increases as the number of provided process chambers increases.

Thus, a substrate processing system capable of simultaneously (or continuously) processing the plurality of substrates and of effectively exchanging the substrates before and after being processed in the process chamber to process the plurality of substrates is required.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

Technical Problem

Therefore, the present invention is directed to provide a substrate transfer apparatus having a structure in which substrates are effectively processed and a substrate processing system using the same.

2

The present invention also provides a substrate transfer apparatus in which time spent on transferring substrates is reduced to improve productivity and a substrate processing system using the same.

5 The present invention also provides a substrate transfer apparatus having a small system area and a substrate processing system using the same.

The present invention also provides a substrate transfer apparatus having a structure in which time spent on processes is reduced and a substrate processing system using the same.

10 The present invention also provides a substrate transfer apparatus having a structure in which the availability of a process chamber is improved and a substrate processing system using the same.

15 The present invention also provides a substrate transfer apparatus having a remarkably reduced the system area and the system width and a substrate processing system using the same.

The present invention also provides a substrate transfer apparatus in which an unnecessary vacuum area is reduced to minimize apparatus cost and installation cost and a substrate processing system using the same.

20 The present invention also provides a substrate processing system capable of effectively using the layout of a space in a semiconductor manufacturing factory.

25 The present invention also provides a substrate processing system in which the number of processing modules corresponding to one transfer robot is reduced to improve throughput.

30 The present invention also provides a substrate processing system including a substrate transfer apparatus having a small driving area.

Technical Solution

35 In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, the present invention provides an apparatus for transferring substrates. The apparatus for transferring substrates between a load lock chamber and first and second process chambers to process a plurality of substrates, which comprises a driving unit to supply a rotational force; at least one spindle connected to the driving unit; a plurality of first swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates to the first process chamber; and a plurality of second swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates to the second process chamber.

45 Preferably, each of the first and second swivel plate arms comprises at least one swivel plate arm to load substrates before being processed; and at least one swivel plate arm to unload processed substrates.

50 Preferably, the first swivel plate arms and the second swivel plate arms are separately mounded, and the spindle includes at least two different spindles which rotate independently.

55 Preferably, the driving unit includes at least one driving unit to supply a rotational force through the at least two different spindles.

60 Preferably, each of the first swivel plate arms and the second swivel plate arms includes a horseshoe-shaped end effector having an opening with an opened side and a support having an upper side to which rims of the substrate are positioned.

Preferably, the end effector includes an entrance path through which the end effector of an atmospheric pressure transfer robot installed in the load lock chamber enters and exits to transfer and receive the substrates.

65 In accordance with another exemplary embodiment, the present invention provides a substrate processing system using the apparatus for transferring substrates, the system

3

comprises a first process chamber including at least two substrate supporting tables; a second process chamber including at least two substrate supporting tables; a transfer chamber in which the substrate transfer apparatus is installed; a first substrate entrance formed between the first process chamber and the transfer chamber; a second substrate entrance formed between the second process chamber and the transfer chamber; and a third substrate entrance formed between the transfer chamber and the exterior; wherein the substrate transfer apparatus receives and transfers the substrates before and after being processed from and to the exterior through the third substrate entrance, such that the substrates before being processed are transferred to the first or second process chamber and the processed substrates processed in the first or second process chamber are transferred to the exterior through the third substrate entrance.

Preferably, the substrate processing system further comprises a load lock chamber connected to the third substrate entrance, and the load lock chamber comprises an atmospheric pressure transfer robot to transfer the substrates under atmospheric pressure.

Preferably, the substrate processing system further comprises a cooling chamber to cool the processed substrates discharged through the third substrate entrance.

Preferably, the first and second process chambers comprise plasma chambers in which plasma processes are carried out.

Preferably, the first process chamber comprises a plasma chamber in which a plasma process is carried out and the second process chamber comprises a cooling chamber to cool heated substrates after being processed.

Preferably, the substrate processing system further comprises a fourth substrate entrance formed between the transfer chamber and another exterior, and the substrate transfer apparatus receives the substrates before being processed from the exterior through the third substrate entrance and transfers the processed substrates to the exterior through the fourth substrate entrance.

Preferably, the substrate processing system further comprises a load lock chamber connected to the fourth substrate entrance, and the load lock chamber includes an atmospheric pressure transfer robot to transfer the substrates under the atmospheric.

Preferably, the substrate processing system further comprises a cooling chamber to cool the processed substrates discharged through the fourth substrate entrance.

In accordance with another exemplary embodiment, the present invention provides an apparatus for transferring substrates. An apparatus for transferring substrates in a transfer chamber between a load lock chamber and process chambers to process a plurality of substrates, which comprises transfer members scattered and disposed on the verge of the transfer chamber; and the plurality of transfer members to simultaneously receive a plurality of substrates provided to a standby position of the transfer chamber through the load lock chamber to transfer the plurality of substrates to the upper sides of substrate supporting tables respectively installed in the process chambers, and to receive respective substrates from the upper sides of the substrate supporting tables to concentrately transfer the same to the standby position of the transfer chamber.

Preferably, each of the transfer members comprises a driving unit to supply a rotational force; two spindles connected to the driving unit; and a plurality of swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates to/from the corresponding substrate supporting tables.

4

Preferably, each of the swivel plate arms comprises: a swivel plate arm to load substrates before being processed; and a swivel plate arm to unload processed substrates.

Preferably, each of the swivel plate arms comprises a horseshoe-shaped end effector having an opening with an opened side and a support having an upper side to which rims of the substrate are positioned.

Preferably, the transfer members are unfolded such that the end effectors of the swivel plate arms are positioned in the upper sides of the corresponding substrate supporting tables, and are folded such that the end effectors of the swivel plate arms are vertically aligned with a single aligning line at the standby position of the transfer chamber.

In accordance with another exemplary embodiment, the present invention provides a substrate transfer apparatus installed in a transfer chamber to transfer substrates between a load lock chamber and process chambers to process a plurality of substrates. The substrate transfer apparatus comprises a plurality of spindles disposed on the verge of the transfer chamber to be spaced apart from each other; a driving unit to supply a driving force to the plurality of spindles; and a plurality of swivel plate arms respectively installed to the plurality of spindles to swivel for the loading/unloading the substrates to/from the corresponding process chambers.

Preferably, each of the swivel plate arms comprises a horseshoe-shaped end effector having an opening with an opened side and a support having an upper side to which rims of the substrate are positioned, and end effectors of the swivel plate arms swivel to be positioned in the upper sides of corresponding substrate supporting tables and to be vertically aligned with a single aligning line at a standby position of the transfer chamber.

Preferably, each of the swivel plate arms comprises at least two rod-antenna type extensible plate arms.

Preferably, each of the swivel plate arms swivel toward the substrate supporting tables at the standby position of the transfer chamber and the extensible swivel plate arms are withdrawn step by step such that the end effectors are positioned in the upper sides of the substrate supporting tables.

In accordance with another exemplary embodiment, the present invention provides a substrate processing system. A substrate processing system comprises a transfer chamber in which a substrate transfer apparatus is installed; and first and second process chambers connected to the lateral sides of the transfer chamber through first and second entrances and including two substrate supporting tables; the substrate transfer apparatus including four transfer members disposed on the verge of the transfer chamber to be spaced apart from each other, wherein the transfer members are unfolded to simultaneously receive four substrates provided from the exterior to a standby position of the transfer chamber and to transfer the four substrates on the upper sides of four substrate supporting tables installed in the first and second process chambers, and are folded to receive the respective substrates from the upper sides of the four substrate supporting tables and to transfer the respective substrates to the standby position of the transfer chamber.

Preferably, each of the transfer members comprises a driving unit to supply a rotational force; two spindles connected to the driving unit; and a plurality of swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates to/from the substrate supporting tables.

Preferably, each of the swivel plate arms comprises a horseshoe-shaped end effector having an opening with an opened side and a support having an upper side to which rims of the substrate are positioned, and the transfer members swivel such that end effectors of the swivel plate arms swivel are positioned in the upper sides of corresponding substrate

5

supporting tables and are vertically aligned with a single aligning line at the standby position of the transfer chamber.

Preferably, each of the swivel plate arms comprises at least two rod-antenna type extensible plate arms.

Preferably, the substrate processing system, further comprises a load lock chamber connected to in front side of the transfer chamber through a third substrate entrance, wherein the load lock chamber comprises an atmospheric pressure transfer robot to transfer the substrates under atmospheric pressure.

Preferably, the front side of the transfer chamber has a shape in which the third entrance is depressed inwardly.

Preferably, the substrate processing system further comprises a cooling chamber positioned in the load lock chamber to cool processed substrates discharged to the load lock chamber through the third substrate entrance.

Preferably, the first and second process chambers comprise plasma chambers in which plasma processes are carried out.

In accordance with another exemplary embodiment, the present invention provides a substrate processing system. A substrate processing system comprises a first process chamber including one substrate supporting table; a second process chamber including one substrate supporting table; a transfer chamber in which a substrate transfer apparatus is installed; a first substrate entrance formed between the transfer chamber and the exterior; a second substrate entrance formed between the first process chamber and the transfer chamber; and a third substrate entrance formed between the second process chamber and the transfer chamber; and the substrate transfer apparatus receives and transfers the substrates before and after being processed from and to the exterior through the first substrate entrance, such that the substrate transfer apparatus transfers the received substrates before being processed to the first or second process chamber through second or the third substrate entrance and receive the processed substrates processed in the first or second process chamber through the second or third substrate entrance and transfers to the exterior through the first substrate entrance.

Preferably, the substrate processing system further comprises a load lock chamber connected to the first substrate entrance, wherein the load lock chamber comprises an atmospheric pressure transfer robot to transfer the substrates under the atmospheric pressure.

Preferably, at least one of the first and second process chambers comprises a plasma chamber.

Preferably, at least one of the first and second process chambers comprises a cooling chamber.

Preferably, at least one of the first and second process chambers comprises an aligning chamber.

Preferably, the substrate transfer apparatus comprises a driving unit to supply a rotational force; at least one spindle connected to the driving unit; a plurality of first swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates to/from the first process chamber; and a plurality of second swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates to/from the second process chamber.

Preferably, the first swivel plate arms and the second swivel plate arms are separately mounded, and the spindle includes at least two different spindles which rotate independently.

Preferably, the driving unit includes at least one driving unit to supply a rotational force through the at least two different spindles.

Preferably, each of the first swivel plate arms and the second swivel plate arms includes a horseshoe-shaped end effector having an opening with an opened side and a support having an upper side to which rims of the substrate are positioned.

6

Preferably, wherein the end effector includes an entrance path through which the end effector of an atmospheric pressure transfer robot installed in the load lock chamber enters and exits to transfer and receive the substrates.

In accordance with another exemplary embodiment, the present invention provides a substrate processing system. A substrate processing system comprises a load lock chamber including an index in which a plurality of carriers are installed in front thereof; and a plurality of processing groups disposed in the rear side of the load lock chamber and stacked in multi-layers, and one of the plurality of process groups comprises a first transfer chamber to which a first substrate transfer apparatus is installed; and first and second process chambers connected to the lateral sides of the first transfer chamber through first and second entrances and including two substrate supporting tables, and another one of the plurality of processing groups comprises a second transfer chamber to which a second substrate transfer apparatus is installed; and first and second aligning chambers connected to the lateral sides of the second transfer chamber through first and second entrances and including two substrate aligners.

Preferably, the first transfer members are unfolded to simultaneously receive four substrates provided to a standby position of the first transfer chamber and to transfer the four substrates on the upper sides of four substrate supporting tables installed in the first and second process chambers, and are folded to receive the respective substrates from the upper sides of the four substrate supporting tables and to transfer the respective substrates to the standby position of the first transfer chamber.

Preferably, the second transfer members are unfolded to simultaneously receive four substrates provided to a standby position of the second transfer chamber and to transfer the four substrates to at least two substrate aligners installed in the first and second aligning chambers, and are folded to receive the respective aligned substrates from the at least two substrate aligners and to transfer the respective aligned substrates to the standby position of the second transfer chamber.

Preferably, another one of the plurality of processing groups comprises a third transfer chamber to which a third substrate transfer apparatus is installed; and a cooling chamber connected to the side of the third transfer chamber through first entrance to cool at least one substrate.

Preferably, each of the first, second, and third substrate transfer apparatuses comprises a driving unit to supply a rotational force; at least one spindle connected to the driving unit; and a plurality of swivel plate arms mounted to the spindle at different heights and to be positioned at corresponding positions in association with the spindle.

Preferably, each of the swivel plate arms comprises a horseshoe-shaped end effector having an opening with an opened side and a support having an upper side to which rims of the substrate are positioned, and the transfer apparatuses swivel such that end effectors of the swivel plate arms are positioned at corresponding positions and are vertically aligned with a single aligning line at the standby positions of the first, second, and third transfer chambers.

Preferably, the first substrate transfer apparatus comprises a plurality of swivel plate arms to simultaneously receive a plurality of substrates provided to a standby position of the first transfer chamber and to transfer the substrates to the substrate supporting tables on the upper sides of the first and second process chamber, to receive respective substrates from the upper sides of the substrate supporting tables, and to transfer the substrates to be concentrately transferred to the standby position of the first transfer chamber.

Preferably, each of the substrate aligners comprises a spin chuck to load the substrate; a sensor to detect the alignment of the substrate loaded on the spin chuck; and an elevator to adjust a height of the spin chuck according to heights of the swivel plate arms.

Preferably, the load lock chamber comprises an atmospheric pressure transfer robot to transfer the substrates under the atmospheric pressure.

Preferably, the first and second process chambers comprise plasma chambers to perform a plasma process.

Preferably, the load lock chamber comprises a double-armed atmospheric pressure transfer robot having four end effectors to take four substrates from the carriers at once and to transfer the four substrates to the first transfer chamber or the second transfer chamber, and each of the first and second transfer chambers comprises a third substrate entrance, through which the substrates from the load lock chamber enter and exit, and which are aligned with each other such that the transfer of the substrates is enabled when the atmospheric pressure transfer robot moved up and down.

Advantageous Effects

According to the present invention, substrates before and after being processed are rapidly exchanged in the substrate processing system in which a plurality of substrates is simultaneously or continuously processed, so that processing rate of the system can be increased and overall productivity of the substrates can be increased. Since a substrate transfer apparatus to simultaneously load and unload the substrate is provided, the process chamber is very easily implemented to process the plurality of substrates. Time for transferring substrates is reduced and as a result productivity increases. The area and width of the system are significantly reduced so that apparatus cost and installation cost can be minimized. Respective chambers for processing, aligning, and cooling the substrates are overlapped with each other so that a total bottom area of the substrate processing system can be reduced. Due to this, the clean room can be narrower than the conventional one and costs for the air-conditioning apparatus of the clean room can also be reduced. Moreover, since the traveling distance of the atmospheric pressure transfer robot for transferring the aligned substrates to a place for the process of the substrates or for transferring the processed substrates to the place for the cooling of the substrates is short and unnecessary operation such as a direction change does not need, time for the transfer of the substrates can be reduced and yield thereof can be increased.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above and other features and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art by describing in detail preferred embodiments thereof with reference to the attached drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a view illustrating an overall structure of a substrate processing system according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a plan view illustrating the substrate processing system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view illustrating a substrate transfer apparatus installed in a transfer chamber;

FIG. 4 illustrates an example in which the substrate transfer apparatus having an upper part and a lower part to be independently driven;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view illustrating the structure of a swivel plate arm;

FIGS. 6 to 10 are views sequentially illustrating substrate exchanging operation performed by the substrate transfer apparatus;

FIG. 11 illustrates an example in which a substrate transfer apparatus having two driving shafts is employed;

FIGS. 12 and 13 are views illustrating a modification of the substrate transfer apparatus having a spindle and a driving unit respectively divided into right parts and left parts;

FIG. 14 is a view illustrating a substrate transfer apparatus to employ four separate spindles;

FIGS. 15 and 16 are views illustrating a modification of the substrate transfer apparatus having a plurality of spindles and driving units;

FIG. 17 is a plan view of a substrate processing system according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 18 is a view illustrating the flow of substrates transferred by the substrate transfer apparatus;

FIGS. 19 and 20 are views illustrating modifications of the substrate processing system according to the embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 21 is a view illustrating an overall structure of a substrate processing system according to a third embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 22 is a plan view of the substrate processing system of FIG. 21;

FIG. 23 is a perspective view of a substrate transfer apparatus installed in a transfer chamber;

FIGS. 24 to 27 are perspective views illustrating the first to fourth transfer members of the substrate transfer apparatus;

FIGS. 28 to 31 are views sequentially illustrating substrate exchanging operations performed by the substrate transfer apparatus;

FIG. 32 is a view illustrating a transfer member having an extensible swivel plate arm;

FIG. 33 is a view illustrating a modification of a substrate processing system to employ the substrate transfer apparatus having the transfer members illustrated in FIG. 32;

FIG. 34 is a view illustrating an overall structure of a substrate processing system according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 35 to 37 are plan views illustrating the substrate processing system whose first, second, and third processing groups are illustrated in FIG. 34;

FIG. 38 is a perspective view illustrating a first substrate transfer apparatus provided in a first transfer chamber;

FIG. 39 is a perspective view illustrating a second substrate transfer apparatus installed in a second transfer chamber;

FIG. 40 is a perspective view illustrating a third substrate transfer apparatus installed in a third transfer chamber;

FIG. 41 is a perspective view illustrating a structure of a swivel plate arm;

FIGS. 42 to 46 are views sequentially illustrating substrate exchanging operations performed by the first substrate transfer apparatus;

FIG. 47 is a front sectional view illustrating the second processing group;

FIGS. 48 to 50 are views sequentially illustrating substrate exchanging operations performed by the second substrate transfer apparatus;

FIG. 51 is a plan view illustrating a modification of the second processing group;

FIG. 52 is a front sectional view illustrating another modification of the second processing group in which an aligning chamber and a cooling chamber are arranged on both sides;

FIG. 53 is a view illustrating a modification of a substrate processing system according to the embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 54 is a plan view illustrating a substrate processing system according to a fifth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 55 is a perspective view illustrating a substrate transfer apparatus provided in the transfer chamber of FIG. 54;

FIG. 56 illustrates an example the substrate transfer apparatus having an upper driving unit and a lower driving unit which are separated from each other;

FIG. 57 is a perspective view illustrating a structure of a swivel plate arm;

FIG. 58 is a plan view illustrating a substrate processing system having a separately driven type substrate transfer apparatus;

FIG. 59 is a plan view illustrating a modification of the swivel plate arm; and

FIG. 60 is a plan view illustrating a substrate processing system having a plurality of processing groups.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

This invention may, however, be embodied in different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein. Rather, these embodiments are provided as teaching examples of the invention. In the drawings, the thickness of layers and regions are exaggerated for clarity. Like numbers refer to like elements. Detailed description of well-known functions and structures that can undesirably make the subject matter of the present invention confuse will be omitted. A substrate transferring apparatus according to the present invention and a substrate processing system using the same will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which preferred embodiments of the invention are shown.

Embodiment 1

FIG. 1 is a view illustrating an overall structure of a substrate processing system according to a first embodiment of the present invention, and FIG. 2 is a plan view illustrating the substrate processing system of FIG. 1. Referring to FIG. 1, the substrate processing system according to the embodiment of the present invention includes first and second process chambers 500 and 600 and a transfer chamber 400 disposed between the first and second process chambers 500 and 600. An index 100 in which a plurality of carriers 110 are mounted is installed in front of a load lock chamber 200. The index 100 is referred to as an equipment front end module (hereinafter, referred to as 'EFEM') and is referred to as including the load lock chamber on occasion. If necessary, the load lock chamber 200 may include a cooling chamber 300 for cooling the processed substrates.

The load lock chamber 200 includes an atmospheric pressure transfer robot 210 operated under the atmospheric pressure. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot 210 transfers substrates between the transfer chamber 400 and the index 100. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot 210 operates to transfer substrates W between the carriers 110 and the transfer chamber 400. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot 210 is implemented by a robot including a double arm structure with four end effectors to take four substrates W out of the carrier 110 and to put the same into the transfer chamber 400. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot 210 can ascend and descend. Various robots used for common semiconductor manufacturing processes as well as the double arm type robot of this embodiment of the present invention may be used as the atmospheric pressure transfer robot 210. For example,

robots having various structures such as a robot having a blade type arm to handle eight substrates W with one arm, a robot including four or more arms, and a combination of the above-mentioned robots may be used.

Respective two of substrate supporting tables 520, 522, 620, and 622 are provided in first and second process chambers 500 and 600 in the front end, in the rear end, and on respective paths where the swivel plate arms of a substrate transfer apparatus 800 swivel.

The first and second process chambers 500 and 600 include a plasma source 700 as vacuum chambers to perform a predetermined plasma processing process. The first and second process chambers 500 and 600 may be configured to perform various substrate processing operations. For example, the first and second process chambers 500 and 600 may be ashing chambers to remove photoresist using plasma, chemical vapor deposition (CVD) chambers to deposit insulating layers, etch chambers to etch apertures or openings in the insulating layers in order to form interconnection structures, physical vapor deposition (PVD) chambers to deposit barrier layers, or PVD chambers to deposit metal layers.

The substrates W processed by the substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention are typically wafer substrates for manufacturing a semiconductor circuit or glass substrates for manufacturing a liquid crystal display (LCD). A plurality of processing systems may be required in order to perform all of the processes required for completely manufacturing an integrated circuit or a chip other than the substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention. However, in order to clarify the present invention, a common structure or structures that can be understood by those skilled in the art are omitted.

The substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention includes the transfer chamber 400 located in the center and the first and second process chambers 500 and 600 respectively disposed at the lateral sides of the transfer chamber 400. At least two substrate supporting tables 520, 522, 620, and 622 are installed in the first and second process chambers 500 and 600. The transfer module 400 includes the substrate transfer apparatus 800.

A first substrate entrance 510 is formed between the transfer chamber 400 and the first process chamber 500, and a second substrate entrance 610 is formed between the transfer chamber 400 and the second process chamber 600. A third substrate entrance 410 is formed between the transfer chamber 400 and the load lock chamber 200. The first to third substrate entrances 510, 610, and 410 are opened and closed by slit valves (not shown).

The exchange of the substrates before and after being processed in the transfer chamber 400 performed by the atmospheric pressure transfer robot 210 is carried out under the atmospheric pressure where the first and second substrate entrances 510 and 610 are closed and the third substrate entrance 410 is opened. On the other hand, the exchange of the substrates before and after being processed performed, between the first and second process chambers 500 and 600 and the transfer chamber 400 by the substrate transfer apparatus 800, is carried out in a vacuum state where the third substrate entrance 410 is closed and the first and second substrate entrances 510 and 610 are opened.

FIG. 3 is a perspective view illustrating a substrate transfer apparatus installed in a transfer chamber. Referring to FIG. 3, the substrate transfer apparatus 800 includes a driving unit 840 to provide a rotational force, a single spindle 830 connected to the driving unit 840, and a plurality of swivel plate arms 810 mounted in the spindle 830.

11

The plurality of swivel plate arms **810** include a plurality of first swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates on/from the first process chamber **500** and a plurality of second swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates on/from the second process chamber **600**. The first and second swivel plate arms are alternately arranged. However, the first and second swivel plate arms may be sequentially arranged. The plurality of swivel plate arms **810** may be divided into loading arms **820** and unloading arms **822**. In this case, the unloading arms **822** are preferably arranged to be lower than the loading arms **820**. The loading arms **820** and the unloading arms **822** make pairs, and in an embodiment, as illustrated in the drawing, the eight swivel plate arms that make four pairs are provided. As illustrated in FIG. 2, the plurality of swivel plate arms **810** are unfolded in the sector form, can swivel, ascend, and descend. The loading arms **820** and the unloading arms **822** make pairs to operate.

Although not shown in the drawing, the driving unit **840** includes an electric motor to generate a rotational force and a gear assembly to transmit the generated rotational force to the spindle **830** such that the plurality of swivel plate arms **810** perform desired operations. Thus, the plurality of swivel plate arms **810** are mounted in the spindle **830** and, as illustrated in FIG. 2, are symmetrically unfolded in the sector form and folded at different radiuses of rotation about the transfer chamber **400**.

FIG. 4 illustrates an example in which the substrate transfer apparatus having an upper part and a lower part to be independently driven. Referring to FIG. 4, the substrate transfer apparatus **800** alternatively includes lower and upper spindles **830a** and **830b** to which the loading arms **820** and the unloading arms **822** are separately mounted and lower and upper driving units **840a** and **840b** to separately drive the lower and upper spindles **830a** and **830b**. Here, the two lower and upper spindles **830a** and **830b** are preferably aligned on the same shaft.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view illustrating the structure of a swivel plate arm. Referring to FIG. 5, the plurality of swivel plate arms **810**, installed in the substrate transfer apparatus **800**, include horseshoe-shaped end effectors **812** having openings **813** with opened sides and a plurality of supports **814** whose upper sides to which rims of the substrates are positioned. The openings **813** are provided to allow lift pins installed in the substrate tables to enter and exit. The end effectors **812** have entrance paths **815** through which end effectors **212** of the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **210** enter and exit. The swivel plate arms **810** can be modified in other forms with the scope of the present invention.

FIGS. 6 to 10 are views sequentially illustrating substrate exchanging operation performed by the substrate transfer apparatus. Firstly, referring to FIG. 6, as indicated by an arrow **S10**, in a state where the first and second substrate entrances **510** and **610** are closed, substrates **W1** before being processed are transferred to the substrate transfer apparatus **800** when the third substrate entrance **410** is opened. When the transfer of the substrates **W1** is finished, the third substrate entrance **410** is closed and the transfer chamber **400** is switched to the same vacuum state as the interiors of the first and second process chambers **500** and **600**. Absolutely, a pumping system for the vacuum state is provided in the system according to this embodiment of the present invention, but is omitted for convenience.

Next, as indicated by an arrow **S20** in FIG. 7, when the lift pins of the plurality of supporting tables **520**, **522**, **620**, and **622** ascend, processed substrates **W2** are elevated to a predetermined height. In association with this operation, the first and second substrate entrances **510** and **610** are opened. At

12

this time, the height of the elevated lift pins of the front substrate supporting table **520** and **620** is relatively lower than that of the lift pins of the rear substrate supporting tables **522** and **622**. Thus, the rotation of the loading arms **820** for the loading/unloading does not interfere with the lift pins.

Continuously, as indicated by an arrow **S30** in FIG. 8, the loading arms **820** and the unloading arms **822** of the substrate transfer apparatus **800** to make pairs symmetrically swivel and are unfolded in the sector form. At this time, the processed substrates **W1** are transferred from the lift pins to the unloading arms **822**. When the processed substrates **W1** is transferred, continuously, as indicated by an arrow **S40** in FIG. 9, the unloading arms **822** return to the initial position of the transfer chamber **400**. As indicated by an arrow **S50**, the lift pins ascend again to receive the substrates **W2** before being processed from the loading arms **820**.

As indicated by an arrow **S60** in FIG. 10, the loading arms **820** also return to the initial position of the transfer chamber **400**. Simultaneously, the first and second substrate entrances **510** and **610** are closed again. As indicated by an arrow **S70**, the lift pins descend to place the substrates **W2** before being processed on the substrate supporting tables **520**, **522**, **620**, and **622**.

The transfer chamber **400** is switched to the atmospheric pressure state and the third substrate entrance **410** is opened. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **210** of the load lock chamber **200**, as indicated by an arrow **S80** in FIG. 10, receives the processed substrates **W1** from the unloading arms **822** and exit from the transfer chamber **400**.

Such the sequential operations of exchanging the substrates **S10** to **S80** are continuously and simultaneously performed within a range where the prior and post operations do not interfere with each other in order to minimize time required to exchange the substrates. It can be understood that the operations **S10** and **S80** are simultaneously performed during the repeated exchange of the substrates. In other words, the exchange of the substrates is performed between the transfer chamber **400** and the load lock chamber **200** by which the processed substrates unloaded in the prior operation are exchanged with the substrates before being processed to be loaded simultaneously.

The unloaded processed substrates **W1** are transferred to the cooling chamber **300** by the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **210** and are cooled to be accumulated in the carriers **110**. Although the cooling chamber **300** is separately provided in this embodiment of the present invention, if the transfer chamber **400** performs the cooling function, the separate cooling chamber **300** may be omitted. Alternatively, one of the first and second process chambers **500** and **600** may serve to as a cooling chamber. For example, it is possible to implement the first process chamber **500** as a plasma chamber and the second process chamber **600** as a cooling chamber. In this case, the first process chamber **500** performs the plasma process of the substrates, the substrate transfer apparatus **800** transfers the processed substrates from the first process chamber **500** to the second process chamber **600** to cool. The cooled substrates may be transferred from the second process chamber **600** to the load lock chamber **200**.

As such, according to the substrate processing system in accordance with this embodiment of the present invention, in order to simultaneously process a plurality of substrates, the first and second process chambers **500** and **600** are arranged in parallel and the transfer chamber **400** is positioned between the first and second process chambers **500** and **600**. The substrate transfer apparatus **800** is provided to enable the fast exchange of the substrates in this configuration, so that a great deal of substrates can be simultaneously processed and rap-

13

idly exchanged. In this embodiment, respective two substrates in the first and second process chambers **500** and **600**, total four substrates can be simultaneously processed and exchanged in one process.**

The substrate processing system of the present invention can be modified by the following alternate embodiments.

FIG. **11** illustrates an example in which a substrate transfer apparatus having two driving shafts is employed. Referring to FIG. **11**, the substrate transfer apparatus **800** can be divided into a left part and a right part to be independently driven. In other words, the swivel plate arms of the first process chamber **500** to transfer the substrates and the swivel plate arms of the second process chamber **600** to transfer the substrates can be separately driven.

The above-structured substrate transfer apparatus, as illustrated in FIG. **12**, includes first and second spindles **830a** and **830b** separated from each other, and first and second driving units **840a** and **840b** to independently drive the same. Moreover, as illustrated in FIG. **13**, the above-structured substrate transfer apparatus may include first to fourth spindles **830a** to **830d** divided into upper parts and lower parts to be driven and first to fourth driving units **840a** to **840d**.

In addition, as illustrated in FIGS. **8**, **9A**, and **9B**, the substrate transfer apparatus can be alternatively modified to include four or eight spindles **830a** to **830d** or **830a** to **830h** and four or eight driving units **840a** to **840d** or **840a** to **840h**. As such, various modifications of the substrate transfer apparatus **800** of the first and second process chambers **500** and **600** to transfer the substrates and the spindles and the driving units, which separately drive the swivel plate arms **810** to load and unload the substrates, are possible.

Embodiment 2

FIG. **17** is a plan view of a substrate processing system according to a second embodiment of the present invention and FIG. **18** is a view illustrating the flow of substrates transferred by the substrate transfer apparatus.

Referring to drawings, the substrate processing apparatus according to the second embodiment of the present invention includes the same structure as the first embodiment, and further includes a load lock chamber **250** having an atmospheric pressure transfer robot **260** disposed and an index **150** in the rear side. A fourth substrate entrance **420** is further formed between the transfer chamber **400** and the rear load lock chamber **250**. In the substrate processing system, the substrates before being processed are loaded to the front side and the processed substrates are unloaded to the rear side. Here, the rear load lock chamber **250** may include a cooling chamber **300** to cool the substrates. Arrows **S100** to **S130** in FIG. **18** indicate the flow of the substrates before being processed and the processed substrates performed by the substrate transfer apparatus **800** step by step.

FIGS. **19** and **20** are views illustrating modifications of the substrate processing system according to the embodiment of the present invention.

As illustrated in FIG. **12**, the first and second process chambers **500** and **600** respectively include four substrate supporting tables **520** to **526** and **620** to **626**, and the substrate transfer apparatus **800** may include sixteen swivel plate arms to correspond to the same. Otherwise, as illustrated in FIG. **13**, only the second process chamber **600** is provided without the first process chamber **500**, and the substrate transfer apparatus **800** may include eight swivel plate arms. At least one cooling chamber **300** to cool the substrates may be provided to correspond to the number of the substrates to be processed.

14

Although the substrate processing system of the present invention is described to include a single layer of the process chamber in the above embodiment, a plurality of process chambers and transfer chambers can be configured by multi-layers. In the multi-layer structure, the substrate transfer apparatus provided in the transfer chambers may be driven independently or simultaneously.

Embodiment 3

FIG. **21** is a view illustrating an overall structure of a substrate processing system according to a third embodiment of the present invention and FIG. **22** is a plan view of the substrate processing system of FIG. **21**.

Referring to FIGS. **14** and **15**, the substrate transfer apparatus according to this embodiment of the present invention includes first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600** and a transfer chamber **1400** disposed therebetween. An index **1100** in which a plurality of carriers **1110** are mounted is installed in front of a load lock chamber **1200**. The index **1100** is referred to as an equipment front end module (hereinafter, referred to as 'EFEM') and is referred to as including the load lock chamber on occasion. If necessary, the load lock chamber **1200** may include a cooling chamber **1300** for cooling the processed substrates.

The load lock chamber **1200** includes an atmospheric pressure transfer robot **1210** operated under the atmospheric pressure. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **1210** transfers substrates between the transfer chamber **1400** and the index **1100**. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **1210** operates to transfer substrates **W** between the carriers **1110** and the transfer chamber **1400**. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **1210** is implemented by a robot including a double arm structure with four end effectors to take four substrates **W** out of the carrier **1210** and to put the same into the transfer chamber **1400**. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **1210** can ascend and descend. Various robots used for common semiconductor manufacturing processes as well as the double arm type robot of this embodiment of the present invention may be used as the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **1210**. For example, robots having various structures such as a robot having a blade type arm to handle eight substrates **W** with one arm, a robot including four or more arms, and a combination of the above-mentioned robots may be used.

Respective two of substrate supporting tables **1520**, **1522**, **1620**, and **1622** are provided in first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600** in the front end, in the rear end, and on respective paths where the swivel plate arms of a substrate transfer apparatus **1800** swivel.

The first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600** include a plasma source **1700** as vacuum chambers to perform a predetermined plasma processing process. The first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600** may be configured to perform various substrate processing operations. For example, the first and second process chambers **500** and **600** may be ashing chambers to remove photoresist using plasma, chemical vapor deposition (CVD) chambers to deposit insulating layers, etch chambers to etch apertures or openings in the insulating layers in order to form interconnection structures, physical vapor deposition (PVD) chambers to deposit barrier layers, or PVD chambers to deposit metal layers.

The substrates **W** processed by the substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention are typically wafer substrates for manufacturing a semiconductor circuit or glass substrates for manufacturing an LCD. A plurality of processing systems may be required in order to perform all of the processes required for completely manu-

15

facturing an integrated circuit or a chip other than the substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention. However, in order to clarify the present invention, a common structure or structures that can be understood by those skilled in the art are omitted.

The substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention includes the transfer chamber **1400** located in the center and the first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600** respectively disposed at the lateral sides of the transfer chamber **1400**. At least two substrate supporting tables **1520**, **1522**, **1620**, and **1622** are respectively installed in the first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600**. The transfer module **1400** includes the substrate transfer apparatus **1800**.

A first substrate entrance **1510** is formed between the transfer chamber **1400** and the first process chamber **1500**, and a second substrate entrance **1610** is formed between the transfer chamber **1400** and the second process chamber **1600**. A third substrate entrance **1410** is formed between the transfer chamber **1400** and the load lock chamber **1200**. The first to third substrate entrances **1510**, **1610**, and **1410** are opened and closed by slit valves (not shown). Especially, a front side **1402** of the transfer chamber **1400** has a shape in which the third entrance **1410** is depressed inwardly. According to this structural feature, since the internal area of the transfer chamber **1400** can be reduced, the scale of a vacuum system required for maintaining the transfer chamber **1400** in a vacuum state can be also reduced.

The exchange of the substrates before and after being processed in the transfer chamber **1400** performed by the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **1210** is carried out under the atmospheric pressure where the first and second substrate entrances **1510** and **1610** are closed and the third substrate entrance **1410** is opened. On the other hand, the exchange of the substrates before and after being processed performed, between the first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600** and the transfer chamber **1400** by the substrate transfer apparatus **1800**, is carried out in a vacuum state where the third substrate entrance **1410** is closed and the first and second substrate entrances **1510** and **1610** are opened.

FIG. **23** is a perspective view of a substrate transfer apparatus installed in a transfer chamber, and FIGS. **24** to **27** are perspective views illustrating the first to fourth transfer members of the substrate transfer apparatus.

Referring to FIGS. **15** to **17D**, the substrate transfer apparatus **1800** includes the first to fourth transfer members **1810a**, **1810b**, **1810c**, and **1810d** scattered and disposed on the verge of the transfer chamber **1400**.

The first to fourth transfer members **1810a**, **1810b**, **1810c**, and **1810d** simultaneously receive four substrates to a standby position (See FIG. **28**) of the transfer chamber **1400** through the third substrate entrance **1410** and transfer the four substrates to the upper sides of the substrate supporting tables **1520**, **1522**, **1620**, and **1622** which are installed in the first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600**, and receive respective substrates from the upper sides of the substrate supporting tables **1520**, **1522**, **1620**, and **1622** to concentrately transfer the same to the standby position of the transfer chamber **1400**.

Each of the first to four transfer members **1810a**, **1810b**, **1810c**, and **1810d** includes a driving unit **1830** to provide a rotational force, a spindle **1820** connected to the driving unit **1830**, and two swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** mounted on the spindle **1820**. The two swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** may be divided into a loading arm **1840** and an unloading arm **1850**. In this case the unloading arm **1850** is preferably disposed lower than the loading arm **1840**.

16

As illustrated, the substrate transfer apparatus **1800** includes eight swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** to make total four pairs. The swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850**, as illustrated in FIG. **28**, can swivel, ascend, and descend in order to move between the standby positions where the swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** are vertically aligned with a single aligning line for the reception and transfer of the substrates from and to the atmospheric pressure robot **1210**, and a scattering position where the swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** are unfolded upward the scattered substrate supporting tables. The loading arms **1840** and the unloading arms **1850** make pairs to operate.

The first transfer member **1810a** includes two swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** to load/unload the substrates on/from the substrate supporting table **1622** of the second process chamber **1600** at the standby position, and the second transfer member **1810b** includes two swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** to load/unload the substrates on/from the substrate supporting table **1620** of the second process chamber **1600** at the standby position. The third transfer member **1810c** includes two swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** to load/unload the substrates on/from the substrate supporting table **1520** of the first process chamber **1500** at the standby position, and the fourth transfer member **1810d** includes two swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** to load/unload the substrates on/from the substrate supporting table **1522** of the first process chamber **1500** at the standby position.

On the other hand, the first to fourth transfer members **1810a**, **1810b**, **1810c**, and **1810d** have different heights to avoid collision with each other when the first to fourth transfer members **1810a**, **1810b**, **1810c**, and **1810d** are gathered at the standby position, and may be alternately or sequentially arranged.

Although not shown in the drawing, the driving unit **1830** includes an electric motor to generate a rotational force and a gear assembly to transmit the generated rotational force to the spindle **1820** such that the swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** perform desired operations. Thus, the swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** are mounted in the spindle **1820** and, as illustrated in FIGS. **15** and **17A** to **17D**, are symmetrically unfolded and folded at different radiuses of rotation about the transfer chamber **1400**. In other words, the first and fourth transfer members **1810a** and **1810d** swivel symmetrically to each other and the second and third transfer members **1810b** and **1810c** swivel symmetrically to each other.

As illustrated in FIGS. **24** to **27**, the swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** of the first to fourth transfer members **1810a**, **1810b**, **1810c**, and **1810d** include horseshoe-shaped end effectors **1842** having openings **1843** with opened sides and a plurality of supports **1844** whose upper sides to which rims of the substrates are positioned. The openings **1843** are provided to allow lift pins installed in the substrate tables to enter and exit. The end effectors **1842** have entrance paths **1845** through which end effectors **1212** of the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **1210** enter and exit. The swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** can be modified in other forms with the scope of the present invention.

The substrate processing system of the present invention can be modified by the following alternate embodiments.

FIGS. **23** through **27** are views illustrating an example in which a transfer member **1810a'** having an extensible plate arm is employed.

Referring to FIGS. **23** through **27**, the swivel plate arm **1840'** includes first to third rod-antenna type extensible plate arms **1841-1**, **1841-2**, and **1841-3**. The first extensible plate arm **1841-1** is a part to be connected to the spindle **1820**, the second extensible plate arm **1841-2** is a part to be extended

17

from the first extensible plate arm **1841-1**, and the third extensible plate arm **1841-3** is a part to be extended from the second extensible plate arm **1841-2** and has an end to be connected to the end effector **1842**.

The transfer members **1810a'** of the substrate transfer apparatus **1800** having the above-mentioned structure, as illustrated in FIG. 33, are operated such that each of the swivel plate arms **1840'** swivels toward respective substrate supporting tables **1522**, **1520**, **1622**, and **1620** from the standby position of the transfer chamber **1800a** and after that the extensible plate arms **1841-1**, **1841-2**, and **1841-3** are withdrawn step by step to position the end effector **1842** in the upper sides of the substrate supporting tables. In other words, the transfer members **1810a'** swivel in a state of shrinking the extensible plate arms **1841-1**, **1841-2**, and **1841-3** in order to reduce the radius of rotation, and extends to position the end effector **1842** at the substrate supporting table.

Due to such extensible structure, as illustrated in FIG. 33, the radiuses of rotation of the transfer members **1810a'** of the substrate transfer apparatus **1800** can be reduced so that the overall area of the transfer chamber can be also reduced.

FIGS. 28 to 31 are views sequentially illustrating substrate exchanging operations performed by the substrate transfer apparatus.

Firstly, referring to FIG. 28, as indicated by an arrow **S110**, in a state where the first and second substrate entrances **1510** and **1610** are closed, substrates before being processed are transferred to the substrate transfer apparatus **1800** when the third substrate entrance **1410** is opened. When the transfer of the substrates is finished, the third substrate entrance **1410** is closed and the transfer chamber **1400** is switched to the same vacuum state as the interiors of the first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600**. Absolutely, a pumping system for the vacuum state is provided in the system according to this embodiment of the present invention, but is omitted for convenience.

Next, as the lift pins (not shown) of the plurality of supporting tables **1520**, **1522**, **1620**, and **1622** ascend, processed substrates are elevated to a predetermined height. In association with this operation, the first and second substrate entrances **1510** and **1610** are opened. At this time, the height of the elevated lift pins is different according to position of the corresponding transfer members where the substrates are transferred. Thus, the rotation of the swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** for the loading/unloading does not interfere with the lift pins.

Continuously, as indicated by an arrow **S120** in FIG. 29, the swivel plate arms **1840** and **1850** of the first to fourth transfer members **1810a** to **1810d** of the substrate transfer apparatus **1800** swivel toward the upper sides of the respective corresponding substrate supporting tables and are unfolded. At this time, the processed substrates are transferred from the lift pins to the unloading arms **1850** of the first to fourth transfer members **1810a** to **1810d**. When the processed substrates is transferred, continuously, as indicated by an arrow **S130** in FIG. 30, the unloading arms **1850** return to the central standby position as the initial position of the transfer chamber **1400**. The lift pins ascend again to receive the substrates before being processed from the loading arms **1840**.

As indicated by an arrow **S140** in FIG. 31, the loading arms **1840** also return to the initial position of the transfer chamber **1400**. Simultaneously, the first and second substrate entrances **1510** and **1610** are closed again. The lift pins descend to place the substrates before being processed on the substrate supporting tables **1520**, **1522**, **1620**, and **1622**.

The transfer chamber **1400** is switched to the atmospheric pressure state and the third substrate entrance **1410** is opened.

18

The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **1210** of the load lock chamber **1200**, as indicated by an arrow **S150** in FIG. 31, receives the processed substrates from the unloading arms **1850** and exit from the transfer chamber **1400**.

Such the sequential operations of exchanging the substrates **S110** to **S150** are continuously and simultaneously performed within a range where the prior and post operations do not interfere with each other in order to minimize time required to exchange the substrates. It can be understood that the operations **S110** and **S150** are simultaneously performed during the repeated exchange of the substrates. In other words, the exchange of the substrates is performed between the transfer chamber **1400** and the load lock chamber **1200** by which the processed substrates unloaded in the prior operation are exchanged with the substrates before being processed to be loaded simultaneously.

The unloaded processed substrates are transferred to the cooling chamber **1300** by the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **1210** and are cooled to be accumulated in the carriers **1110**. Although the cooling chamber **1300** is separately provided in this embodiment of the present invention, if the transfer chamber **1400** performs the cooling function, the separate cooling chamber **1300** may be omitted. Alternatively, one of the first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600** may serve to as a cooling chamber. For example, it is possible to implement the first process chamber **1500** as a plasma chamber and the second process chamber **1600** as a cooling chamber. In this case, the first process chamber **1500** performs the plasma process of the substrates, the substrate transfer apparatus **1800** transfers the processed substrates from the first process chamber **1500** to the second process chamber **1600** to cool. The cooled substrates may be transferred from the second process chamber **1600** to the load lock chamber **1200**.

As such, according to the substrate processing system in accordance with this embodiment of the present invention, in order to simultaneously process a plurality of substrates, the first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600** are arranged in parallel and the transfer chamber **1400** is positioned between the first and second process chambers **1500** and **1600**. The substrate transfer apparatus **1800** is provided to enable the fast exchange of the substrates in this configuration, so that a great deal of substrates can be simultaneously processed and rapidly exchanged. In this embodiment, respective two substrates in the first and second process chamber **1500** and **1600**, total four substrates can be simultaneously processed and exchanged in one process.

Although the substrate processing system of the present invention is described to include a single layer of the process chamber in the above embodiment, a plurality of process chambers and transfer chambers can be configured by multi-layers. In the multi-layer structure, the substrate transfer apparatus provided in the transfer chambers may be driven independently or simultaneously.

Embodiment 4

FIG. 34 is a view illustrating an overall structure of a substrate processing system according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention, and FIGS. 35 to 37 are plan views illustrating the substrate processing system whose first, second, and third processing groups are illustrated in FIG. 34.

Referring to FIGS. 21 to 22C, the substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention includes a load lock chamber **2200** and first, second and third

19

processing groups a, b, and c, which are disposed to be accumulated in multi-layers in the rear side of the load lock chamber **220**.

An index **2100** in which a plurality of carriers **2110** are mounted is installed in front of a load lock chamber **2200**. The index **2100** is referred to as an equipment front end module (hereinafter, referred to as 'EFEM') and is referred to as including the load lock chamber on occasion.

The load lock chamber **2200** includes an atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210** operated under the atmospheric pressure. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210** transfers substrates between first, second, and third transfer chambers **2400a**, **2400b**, and **2400c** respectively corresponding to the processing groups and the index **2100**. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210** is implemented by a robot including a double arm structure with four end effectors to take four substrates **W** out of the carrier **2210** and to put the same into the first, second, and third transfer chambers **2400a**, **2400b**, and **2400c** of the respective layers. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210** can ascend and descend. Various robots used for common semiconductor manufacturing processes as well as the double arm type robot of this embodiment of the present invention may be used as the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210**. For example, robots having various structures such as a robot having a blade type arm to handle eight substrates **W** with one arm, a robot including four or more arms, and a combination of the above-mentioned robots may be used.

As illustrated in FIGS. **21** to **22C**, the first, second, and third processing groups a, b, and c are stacked in the multi-layers. The first processing group a positioned in the first layer includes first and second process chambers **2500a** and **2500b** to simultaneously process four substrates, the second processing group b positioned in the second layer includes first and second aligning chambers **2600a** and **2600b** to align substrates before being processed, and the third processing group c positioned in the uppermost layer includes a cooling chamber **2700** to cool the processed substrates.

As such, in the substrate processing system **2010** according to this embodiment of the present invention, in plan view, the aligning chambers are disposed to overlap with the cooling chamber in the process chambers so that a total bottom area of the substrate processing system can be reduced. Thus, manufacturing costs of a clean room can be reduced, and the direction changing operation of the atmospheric pressure robot **2210** can be eliminated during the transfer of the substrates from the second transfer chamber **2400b** to the first transfer chamber **2400a** and from the first transfer chamber **2400a** to the third transfer chamber **2400c**. Moreover, since the transfer distance is short, a rapid transfer of the substrates is enabled.

Referring to FIG. **35**, the first processing group a positioned in the first layer includes the first and second process chambers **2500a** and **2500b** and the first transfer chamber **2400a** disposed therebetween.

Respective two of substrate supporting tables **2520** and **2522** are provided in first and second process chambers **2500a** and **2500b** in the front and rear ends, and on respective paths where swivel plate arms of a first substrate transfer apparatus **2800a** swivel.

The first and second process chambers **2500a** and **2500b** include a plasma source (not shown) as vacuum chambers to perform a predetermined plasma processing process.

A first substrate entrance **2510a** is formed between the first transfer chamber **2400a** and the first process chamber **2500a**, and a second substrate entrance **2510b** is formed between the first transfer chamber **2400a** and the second process chamber

20

2500b. A third substrate entrance **2410** is formed between the first transfer chamber **2400a** and the load lock chamber **2200**. The first to third substrate entrances **2510a**, **2510b**, and **2410** are opened and closed by slit valves (not shown).

The exchange of the substrates before and after being processed in the first transfer chamber **2400a** performed by the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210** is carried out under the atmospheric pressure where the first and second substrate entrances **2510a** and **2510b** are closed and the third substrate entrance **2410** is opened. On the other hand, the exchange of the substrates before and after being processed performed, between the first and second process chambers **2500a** and **2500b** and the first transfer chamber **2400a** by the first substrate transfer apparatus **2800a**, is carried out in a vacuum state where the third substrate entrance **2410** is closed and the first and second substrate entrances **2510a** and **2510b** are opened.

The first and second process chambers **2500a** and **2500b** may be configured to perform various substrate processing operations, for example, such as ashing chambers to remove photoresist using plasma, chemical vapor deposition (CVD) chambers to deposit insulating layers, etch chambers to etch apertures or openings in the insulating layers in order to form interconnection structures, physical vapor deposition (PVD) chambers to deposit barrier layers, or PVD chambers to deposit metal layers.

The substrates **W** processed by the substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention are typically wafer substrates for manufacturing a semiconductor circuit or glass substrates for manufacturing a liquid crystal display (LCD). A plurality of processing systems may be required in order to perform all of the processes required for completely manufacturing an integrated circuit or a chip other than the substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention. However, in order to clarify the present invention, a common structure or structures that can be understood by those skilled in the art are omitted.

Referring to FIGS. **22B** and **26**, the second processing group b positioned in the second layer includes the first and second aligning chambers **2600a** and **2600b** and the second transfer chamber **2400b** disposed therebetween.

The first and second aligning chambers **2600a** and **2600b** include respective one spin chuck **2640** disposed on paths where swivel plate arms of a second substrate transfer apparatus **2800b** swivel.

The first and second aligning chambers **2600a** and **2600b** are chambers to align the substrates before performing process in the first and second process chamber **2500a** and **2500b**, and include substrate aligners having the spin chuck **2640**, a detecting unit **2650**, i.e., a sensor, and an elevator **2660** to adjust the height of the spin chuck **2640** according to the height of the swivel plate arms. The substrate aligner may be configured to swivel the spin chuck **2640** by placing the substrate thereon such that the detecting unit **2650** positioned in the upper side of the substrate detects a position of the substrate. Here, the detecting unit **2650** includes a charge coupled device (CCD) and a corresponding light source and detects the positions of the substrates. On the other hand, as illustrated in FIG. **47**, according to the positions of the first and second swivel plate arms, the spin chuck **2640** of the first aligning chamber **2600b** is disposed to be lower than the position of the spin chuck **2640** of the second aligning chamber **2600a**.

A first substrate entrance **2610a** is formed between the first transfer chamber **2400a** and the first aligning chamber **2600a**, and a second substrate entrance **2610b** is formed between the

21

second transfer chamber **2400b** and the second aligning chamber **2600b**. A third substrate entrance **2412** is formed between the second transfer chamber **2400b** and the load lock chamber **2200**. The first to third substrate entrances **2610a**, **2610b**, and **2412** are opened and closed by slit valves (not shown).

Referring to FIG. 37, the third processing group *c* positioned in the uppermost layer includes a third transfer chamber **2400c** aligned with the second transfer chamber **2400b** and a cooling chamber **2700** disposed at a side thereof. A first substrate entrance **2710** is formed between the third transfer chamber **2400c** and the cooling chamber **2700**, and a third substrate entrance **2414** is formed between the third transfer chamber **2400c** and the load lock chamber **2200**. The first and third substrate entrances **2710** and **2414** are opened and closed by slit valves (not shown).

As understood without description, the cooling chamber **2700** is a chamber to cool four substrates processed in the first and second process chambers, must include a cooling stage to which the four substrates are placed, and may further include a cooling gas supply to supply a cooling air to the substrates. Since the configuration and method of cooling the substrates are conventional and already known to those skilled in the art, the configuration and the method are omitted.

FIGS. 23A to 23C are perspective views of first, second, and third substrate transfer apparatuses provided in the first, second, and third transfer chambers.

Firstly, referring to FIG. 38, the first substrate transfer apparatus **2800a** includes a driving unit **2840** to provide a rotational force, a single spindle **2830** connected to the driving unit **2840**, and eight swivel plate arms **2810** mounted in the spindle **2830**.

The eight swivel plate arms **2810** include a plurality of first swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates on/from the first process chamber **2500a** and a plurality of second swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates on/from the second process chamber **2500b**. The first and second swivel plate arms are alternately arranged. However, the first and second swivel plate arms may be sequentially arranged. The swivel plate arms **2810** may be divided into loading arms **2820** and unloading arms **2822**. In this case, the unloading arms **2822** are preferably arranged to be lower than the loading arms **2820**. The loading arms **2820** and the unloading arms **2822** make pairs, and in an embodiment, as illustrated in the drawing, the eight swivel plate arms that make four pairs are provided. As illustrated in FIG. 35, the plurality of swivel plate arms **2810** are unfolded in the sector form, can swivel, ascend, and descend. The loading arms **2820** and the unloading arms **2822** make pairs to operate.

Although not shown in the drawing, the driving unit **2840** includes an electric motor to generate a rotational force and a gear assembly to transmit the generated rotational force to the spindle **2830** such that the plurality of swivel plate arms **2810** perform desired operations. Thus, the plurality of swivel plate arms **2810** are mounted in the spindle **2830** and, as illustrated in FIG. 35, are symmetrically unfolded in the sector form and folded at different radiuses of rotation about the first transfer chamber **2400a**.

Although the substrate processing system of the present invention is described to include a single spindle, the substrate processing system may include spindles installed to the lateral sides thereof.

FIG. 39 is a perspective view illustrating the second substrate transfer apparatus installed in the second transfer chamber.

Referring to FIG. 39, the second substrate transfer apparatus **2800b**, like the first substrate transfer apparatus **2800a**,

22

includes a driving unit **2840** to provide a rotational force, a single spindle **2830** connected to the driving unit **2840**, and four swivel plate arms **2810** mounted in the spindle **2830**. The second substrate transfer apparatus **2800b** may include a plurality of driving units and a plurality of spindles connected to the respective driving units such that the four swivel plate arms **2810** can swivel independently.

The four swivel plate arms **2810** include first two swivel plate arms, disposed in the lower side, to load/unload the substrates on/from the first aligning chamber **2600a** and second two swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates on/from the second aligning chamber **2600b**. The first and second swivel plate arms are sequentially arranged. However, the first and second swivel plate arms may be alternately arranged. As illustrated in FIG. 47, according to the positions of the first and second swivel plate arms, the spin chuck **2640** of the first aligning chamber **2600b** is disposed to be lower than the spin chuck **2640** of the second aligning chamber **2600a**.

FIG. 40 is a perspective view illustrating a third substrate transfer apparatus installed in the third transfer chamber. Referring to FIG. 40, the third substrate transfer apparatus **2800c**, like the first substrate transfer apparatus **2800a**, includes a driving unit **2840** to provide a rotational force, a single spindle **2830** connected to the driving unit **2840**, and four swivel plate arms **2810** mounted in the spindle **2830**. The four swivel plate arms **2810** are for loading/unloading the substrates on/from the cooling chamber **2700**.

Although not shown in the drawing, the first substrate transfer apparatus may include upper and lower spindles to which the loading arms **2820** and the unloading arms **2822** are separately mounted and a driving unit with upper and lower driving units to drive the upper and lower spindles.

FIG. 41 is a perspective view illustrating a structure of a single swivel plate arm.

Referring to FIG. 41, the plurality of swivel plate arms **2810**, installed in the first, second, and third substrate transfer apparatuses **2800a**, **2800b**, and **2800c**, include horseshoe-shaped end effectors **2812** having openings **2813** with opened sides and a plurality of supports **2814** whose upper sides to which rims of the substrates are positioned. The openings **2813** are provided to allow lift pins installed in the substrate tables to enter and exit. The end effectors **2812** have entrance paths **2815** through which end effectors **2212** of the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **210** enter and exit. The swivel plate arms **2810** can be modified in other forms with the scope of the present invention.

FIGS. 42 to 46 are views sequentially illustrating substrate exchanging operations performed by the first substrate transfer apparatus.

Firstly, referring to FIG. 42, as indicated by an arrow **S210**, in a state where the first and second substrate entrances **2510a** and **2510b** are closed, substrates **W2** before being processed are transferred to the substrate transfer apparatus **2800a** when the third substrate entrance **2410** is opened. When the transfer of the substrates **W2** is finished, the third substrate entrance **2410** is closed and the first transfer chamber **2400a** is switched to the same vacuum state as the interiors of the first and second process chambers **2500a** and **2500b**. Absolutely, a pumping system for the vacuum state is provided in the system according to this embodiment of the present invention, but is omitted for convenience.

Next, as indicated by an arrow **S220** in FIG. 43, when the lift pins of the plurality of supporting tables **2520** and **2522** ascend, processed substrates **W1** are elevated to a predetermined height. In association with this operation, the first and second substrate entrances **2510a** and **2510b** are opened. At

23

this time, the height of the elevated lift pins of the front substrate supporting table **2520** is relatively lower than that of the lift pins of the rear substrate supporting tables **2522**. Thus, the rotation of the loading arms **2820** for the loading/unloading does not interfere with the lift pins.

Continuously, as indicated by an arrow **S230** in FIG. **44**, the loading arms **2820** and the unloading arms **2822** of the first substrate transfer apparatus **2800a** to make pairs symmetrically swivel and are unfolded in the sector form. At this time, the processed substrates **W1** are transferred from the lift pins to the unloading arms **2822**. When the processed substrates **W1** is transferred, continuously, as indicated by an arrow **S240** in FIG. **45**, the unloading arms **2822** return to the initial position of the first transfer chamber **2400a**. As indicated by an arrow **S250**, the lift pins ascend again to receive the substrates **W2** before being processed from the loading arms **2820**.

As indicated by an arrow **S260** in FIG. **46**, the loading arms **2820** also return to the initial position of the first transfer chamber **2400a**. Simultaneously, the first and second substrate entrances **2510a** and **2510b** are closed again. As indicated by an arrow **S270**, the lift pins descend to place the substrates **W2** before being processed on the substrate supporting tables **2520** and **2522**.

The first transfer chamber **2400a** is switched to the atmospheric pressure state and the third substrate entrance **2410** is opened. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210** of the load lock chamber **2200**, as indicated by an arrow **S280** in FIG. **46**, receives the processed substrates **W1** from the unloading arms **2822** and exit from the first transfer chamber **2400a**.

Such the sequential operations of exchanging the substrates **S210** to **S280** are continuously and simultaneously performed within a range where the prior and post operations do not interfere with each other in order to minimize time required to exchange the substrates. It can be understood that the operations **S210** and **S280** are simultaneously performed during the repeated exchange of the substrates. In other words, the exchange of the substrates is performed between the first transfer chamber **2400a** and the load lock chamber **2200** by which the processed substrates unloaded in the prior operation are exchanged with the substrates before being processed to be loaded simultaneously.

FIGS. **48** to **50** are views sequentially illustrating substrate exchanging performed by the second substrate transfer apparatus.

Firstly, referring to FIG. **48**, as indicated by an arrow **S210**, substrates **W1** before being processed are transferred to the substrate transfer apparatus **2800b** when the third substrate entrance **2412** is opened. When the transfer of the substrates is finished, the third substrate entrance **2412** is closed and simultaneously the first and second substrate entrances **2610a** and **2610b** are opened. Continuously, as indicated by an arrow **S220** in FIG. **49**, one of the first swivel plate arms and one of the second swivel plate arms of the second substrate transfer apparatus **2800b** symmetrically swivel and are unfolded to place the substrates **W1** on the corresponding spin chucks **2640**, and as indicated by an arrow **S230** in FIG. **50**, return to the initial positions. When the alignment of the substrates in the first and second aligning chambers **2600a** and **2600b** is finished, the alignment of the rest two substrates is carried out like the above-mentioned operations. When the two alignments of the four substrates are finished, the aligned substrates are transferred from the second transfer chamber **2400b** to the first transfer chamber **2400a** by the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210**.

24

The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210** can transfer the substrates from the second transfer chamber **2400b** to the first transfer chamber **2400a** in a state of adjusting the height directly after taking the substrates from the second transfer chamber **2400b**. In other words, since the third substrate entrances **2410** and **2412** of the first and second transfer chambers **2800a**, **2800b** are aligned with each other, the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210** can rapidly transfer the substrates from the second transfer chamber **2400b** to the first transfer chamber **2400a** without the direction change.

Meanwhile, the substrates processed in the first and second process chambers **2500a** and **2500b** are transferred to the third transfer chamber **2400c** by the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210**. In this operation, the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210** can rapidly transfer the substrates from the first transfer chamber **2400a** to the third transfer chamber **2400c** without the direction change. The substrates are transferred to and cooled in the cooling chamber **2700** by the third substrate transfer apparatus **2800c** installed in the transfer chamber **2400c**, and are taken out and accumulated in the carrier **2100** by the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210**.

In this embodiment, since the four substrates **W** are simultaneously processed in the first and second process chambers **2500a** and **2500b**, twenty-four substrates **W** are simultaneously cooled in the cooling chamber **2700**. However, time for the cooling of the substrates may be longer than time required for processing the substrates. In this case, by considering entire efficiency, it is considerable to dispose the cooling chambers **2700** to the lateral sides of the third transfer chamber **2400c**.

The substrate processing system can be modified by the following alternative embodiments.

FIG. **51** is a view illustrating a first aligning chamber **2600c** and a second aligning chamber **2600d** to align the substrates respectively. As illustrated in FIG. **51**, the first and second aligning chambers **2600c** and **2600d** may be configured, like the first and second process chambers **2500a** and **2500b**, such that two substrates can be aligned in one chamber.

FIG. **52** is a front sectional view illustrating a modification of the second processing group. As illustrated in FIG. **52**, in the modified second processing group **b'**, any one of the first and second aligning chambers **2600a** and **2600b** is substituted with the cooling chamber **2700**. When the second processing group **b'** is employed, the third processing group can be omitted.

As illustrated in FIG. **52**, since time for aligning the substrates is very short, one chamber is preferably substituted with the cooling chamber. In this case, the second and third substrate transfer apparatuses **2800d** and **2800e** must be disposed in the second transfer chamber **2400b**. In other words, the second upper substrate transfer apparatus **2800d** is used for the transfer of the substrates to be aligned, and the third lower substrate transfer apparatus **2800e** is used for the transfer of the substrates to be cooled. Here, since the second substrate transfer apparatus **2800d** transfers one substrate once, the driving unit preferably drives the swivel plate arms to transfer the substrates independently.

The substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention, as illustrated in FIG. **53**, may include a single cooling chamber **2700** disposed in the upper side of the second processing group **b** by removing the third processing group **c**. The cooling chamber **2700** may include stages to which four substrates are simultaneously placed, and the four substrates are directly loaded in the cooling chamber **2700** by the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **2210**.

FIG. 54 is a plan view illustrating a substrate processing system according to a fifth embodiment of the present invention.

Referring to FIG. 54, the substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention includes first and second process chambers 3400 and 3410, a transfer chamber 3300 disposed therebetween, and a load rock chamber 3200 provided in front of the transfer chamber 3300. An index 3100 in which a plurality of carriers 3110 are mounted is installed in front of a load lock chamber 3200. The index 3100 is referred to as an equipment front end module (hereinafter, referred to as 'EFEM') and is referred to as including the load lock chamber on occasion. If necessary, the substrate processing system may include a cooling chamber (not shown) for cooling the processed substrates.

The load lock chamber 3200 includes an atmospheric pressure transfer robot 3210 operated under the atmospheric pressure. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot 3210 transfers substrates between the transfer chamber 3300 and the index 3100. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot 3210 operates to transfer substrates W between the carriers 3110 and the transfer chamber 3300. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot 3210 is implemented by a robot including a double arm structure with four end effectors to take two substrates W out of the carrier 3110 and to put the same into the transfer chamber 3300 at once. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot 3210 includes a track 3220 along which the atmospheric pressure transfer robot 3210 moved laterally. Various robots used for common semiconductor manufacturing processes as well as the double arm type robot of this embodiment of the present invention may be used as the atmospheric pressure transfer robot 3210.

The first and second process chambers 3400 and 3410 are vacuum chambers to perform the plasma process. Respective substrate supporting tables 3402 and 3412 are provided in first and second process chambers 3400 and 3410 on respective paths where the swivel plate arms of a substrate transfer apparatus 3500 swivel. The first and second process chambers 3400 and 3410 may be configured to perform various substrate processing operations. For example, the first and second process chambers 3400 and 3410 may be ashing chambers to remove photoresist using plasma, chemical vapor deposition (CVD) chambers to deposit insulating layers, etch chambers to etch apertures or openings in the insulating layers in order to form interconnection structures, physical vapor deposition (PVD) chambers to deposit barrier layers, or PVD chambers to deposit metal layers.

The substrates W processed by the substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention are typically wafer substrates for manufacturing a semiconductor circuit or glass substrates for manufacturing an LCD. A plurality of processing systems may be required in order to perform all of the processes required for completely manufacturing an integrated circuit or a chip other than the substrate processing system according to this embodiment of the present invention. However, in order to clarify the present invention, a common structure or structures that can be understood by those skilled in the art are omitted.

The transfer chamber 3300 includes a substrate transfer apparatus 3500. A first substrate entrance 3310 is formed between the transfer chamber 3300 and a load rock chamber 3200. A second substrate entrance 3320 is formed between the transfer chamber 3300 and the first process chamber 3400, and a third substrate entrance 3330 is formed between the transfer chamber 3300 and the second process chamber 3410.

The first to third substrate entrances 3310, 3320, and 3330 are opened and closed by slit valves (not shown).

The exchange of the substrates before and after being processed in the transfer chamber 3300 performed by the atmospheric pressure transfer robot 3210 is carried out under the atmospheric pressure where the second and third substrate entrances 3320 and 3330 are closed and the first substrate entrance 3310 is opened. On the other hand, the exchange of the substrates before and after being processed performed, between the first and second process chambers 3400 and 3410 and the transfer chamber 3300 by the substrate transfer apparatus 3500, is carried out in a vacuum state where the first substrate entrance 3310 is closed and the second and third substrate entrances 3320 and 3330 are opened.

FIG. 55 is a perspective view illustrating a substrate transfer apparatus provided in the transfer chamber of FIG. 54.

Referring to FIG. 55, the substrate transfer apparatus 3500 includes a driving unit 3540 to provide a rotational force, a single spindle 3530 connected to the driving unit 3540, and a plurality of swivel plate arms 3510 mounted in the spindle 3530. The plurality of swivel plate arms 3510 include first two swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates on/from the first process chamber 3400 and second two swivel plate arms to load/unload the substrates on/from the second process chamber 3410. The first and second swivel plate arms are alternately arranged. However, the first and second swivel plate arms may be sequentially arranged. The plurality of swivel plate arms 3510 may be divided into loading arms 3520 and unloading arms 3522. In this case, the unloading arms 3522 are preferably arranged to be lower than the loading arms 3520. The loading arms 3520 and the unloading arms 3522 make pairs, and in an embodiment, as illustrated in the drawing, the four swivel plate arms that make two pairs are provided.

As illustrated in FIG. 54, the plurality of swivel plate arms 3510 are unfolded in the sector form. Although not shown in the drawing, the driving unit 3540 includes an electric motor to generate a rotational force and a gear assembly to transmit the generated rotational force to the spindle 3530 such that the plurality of swivel plate arms 3510 perform desired operations. Thus, the plurality of swivel plate arms 3510 are mounted in the spindle 3530 and, as illustrated in FIG. 54, are symmetrically unfolded in the sector form and folded about the spindle 3530.

FIG. 56 illustrates an example the substrate transfer apparatus having an upper driving unit and a lower driving unit which are separated from each other.

Referring to FIG. 56, a substrate transfer apparatus 3500a according to this embodiment of the present invention includes lower and upper spindles 3530a and 3530b to which the loading arms 3520 and the unloading arms 3522 are separately mounted and lower and upper driving units 3540a and 3540b to separately drive the lower and upper spindles 3530a and 3530b. Here, the two lower and upper spindles 3530a and 3530b are preferably aligned on the same shaft.

FIG. 57 is a perspective view illustrating a structure of a swivel plate arm.

Referring to FIG. 57, the plurality of swivel plate arms 3510, installed in the substrate transfer apparatus 3500, include horseshoe-shaped end effectors 3512 having openings 3513 with opened sides and a plurality of supports 3514 whose upper sides to which rims of the substrates are positioned. The openings 3513 are provided to allow lift pins installed in the substrate tables to enter and exit. The end effectors 3512 have entrance paths 3515 through which end effectors 3512 of the atmospheric pressure transfer robot

3510 enter and exit. The swivel plate arms **3510** can be modified in other forms with the scope of the present invention.

The substrate transfer is performed by the substrate transfer apparatus of the present invention as follows.

In a state where the second and third substrate entrances **3320** and **3330** are closed, substrates **W** before being processed are transferred to the loading arm **3520** of the substrate transfer apparatus **3500** when the first substrate entrance **3310** is opened. When the transfer of the substrates **W** is finished, the first substrate entrance **3310** is closed and the transfer chamber **3300** is switched to the same vacuum state as the interiors of the first and second process chambers **3400** and **3410**. Absolutely, a pumping system for the vacuum state is provided in the system according to this embodiment of the present invention, but is omitted for convenience.

Next, the processed substrates **W** stay on substrate supporting tables **3402** and **3412** of the first and second process chambers **3400** and **3410**. When the lift pins of the supporting tables **3402** and **3412** ascend, the processed substrates **W** are elevated to a predetermined height. In association with this operation, the second and third substrate entrances **3320** and **3330** are opened. The loading arm **3520** and the unloading arm **3522** of the substrate transfer apparatus **3500** make pairs and are unfolded in the sector form. At this time, the processed substrates **W** are transferred from the lift pins to the unloading arms **3522**.

After the transfer of the substrates **W**, the unloading arms **3522** return to the initial positions of the transfer chamber **3300**. The lift pins ascend again to receive the substrates **W** before being processed. The loading arms **3520** return to the initial positions of the transfer chamber **3300**, and simultaneously the second and third substrate entrances **3320** and **3330** are closed again. In association with this operation, the lift pins descend to place the substrates **W** before being processed on the substrate supporting tables **3402** and **3412**. Next, the transfer chamber **3300** is switched to the atmospheric pressure state and the first substrate entrance **3310** is opened. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **3210** of the load rock chamber **3200** receives the processed substrates **W** from the unloading arms **3522** and exits from the transfer chamber **3400**.

Such the sequential operations of exchanging the substrates are continuously and simultaneously performed within a range where the prior and post operations do not interfere with each other in order to minimize time required to exchange the substrates. The exchanges of the substrates before and after being processed are simultaneously performed by the substrate transfer apparatus **3500** of the transfer chamber **3300** and the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **3210**. In other words, the exchange of the substrates is performed between the transfer chamber **3400** and the load lock chamber **3200** by which the processed substrates unloaded in the prior operation are exchanged with the substrates before being processed to be loaded simultaneously. The unloaded processed substrates **W** are accumulated in the carriers **3110** by the atmospheric pressure transfer robot **3210**.

If the unloaded substrates **W** need to be cooled, the substrate processing system may include a cooling chamber to cool the substrates. To this end, the cooling chamber may be installed at a proper position of the substrate processing system. Alternately, one of the first and second process chambers **3400** and **3410** may serve to as a cooling chamber. For example, it is possible to implement the first process chamber **3400** as a plasma chamber and the second process chamber **3410** as a cooling chamber. In this case, the first process chamber **3400** performs the plasma process of the substrates, the substrate transfer apparatus **3500** transfers the processed

substrates from the first process chamber **3400** to the second process chamber **3410** to cool. The cooled substrates may be transferred from the second process chamber **3410** to the load rock chamber **3200**.

If the substrates **W** before being processes required to be aligned, the substrate processing system may further include an aligning device to align the substrates. To this end, the aligning device may be installed to a proper position in the substrate processing system. Alternately, one of the first and second process chambers **3400** and **3410** may be used as the aligning device. For example, it is possible to implement the first process chamber **3400** as a plasma chamber and the second process chamber **3410** as the aligning device. In this case, the substrate transfer apparatus **3500** transfer the substrates in the second process chamber **3410** to be aligned before being processes before the first process chamber **3400** performs the plasma process of the substrates, and the substrates are transferred to the first process chamber **3400** to perform the plasma process.

As such, according to the substrate processing system in accordance with this embodiment of the present invention, in order to simultaneously process a plurality of substrates, the first and second process chambers **3400** and **3410** are arranged in parallel and the transfer chamber **3300** is positioned between the first and second process chambers **3400** and **3410**. The substrate transfer apparatus is provided to enable the fast exchange of the substrates in this configuration, so that substrates before and after being processed can be simultaneously processed and rapidly exchanged.

FIG. **58** is a plan view illustrating a substrate processing system having a separately driven substrate transfer apparatus, and FIG. **59** is a plan view illustrating a modification of the swivel plate arm.

Referring to FIG. **58**, the separately driven substrate transfer apparatuses **3500a** and **3500b** are divided into right and left parts to be independently driven and are installed in a transfer chamber **3300**. In other words, one substrate transfer apparatus **3500a** transfers the substrates of the first process chamber **3400** and the other substrate transfer apparatus **3500b** transfers the substrates of the second process chamber **3410**. Since the detailed configurations of the separately driven substrate transfer apparatuses **3500a** and **3500b** are the same as those in FIGS. **32** and **33**, the description is omitted. As illustrated in FIG. **59**, the separately driven substrate transfer apparatuses **3500a** and **3500b** may include L-shaped swivel plate arms **3510'**.

FIG. **60** is a plan view illustrating a substrate processing system having a plurality of processing groups.

Referring to FIG. **60**, the substrate processing system includes a plurality of processing groups **3600**, **3610**, and **3620**. The plurality of processing groups **3600**, **3610**, and **3620**, like the configuration as illustrated in FIG. **54**, the transfer chamber located in the center and the plasma process chambers respectively disposed at the lateral sides of the transfer chamber. Among the plurality of processing groups **3600**, **3610**, and **3620**, first and third processing groups **3600** and **3620** face each other and second processing groups **3610** are disposed in the rear side. The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **3210** positioned in the load rock chamber **3200** includes tracks **3220** and **3230** arranged in a T-shape.

The atmospheric pressure transfer robot **3210** moves along the tracks **3220** and **3230** to transfer the substrates between the carriers **3110** of the index **3100** and the first to third processing groups **3600**, **3610**, and **3620**. The two process chambers provided in the first to third processing groups **3600**, **3610**, and **3620** may be chambers to perform the plasma process. Otherwise, any one of them may be a cooling cham-

29

ber or an aligning device. Alternately, both of two process chambers, provided in any one of the first to third processing groups 3600, 3610 and 3620 may be cooling chambers or aligning devices. As such, at least one of the plurality of process chambers provided in the first to third processing groups 3600, 3610 and 3620 may be a cooling chamber and/or at least one aligning device.

The invention has been described using preferred exemplary embodiments. However, it is to be understood that the scope of the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments. On the contrary, the scope of the invention is intended to include various modifications and alternative arrangements of the substrate transfer apparatus and the substrate processing system of the present invention within the capabilities of persons skilled in the art using presently known or future technologies and equivalents. The scope of the claims, therefore, should be accorded the broadest interpretation so as to encompass all such modifications and similar arrangements.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

As described above, according to the present invention, substrates before and after being processed are rapidly exchanged in the substrate processing system in which a plurality of substrates is simultaneously or continuously processed, so that processing rate of the system can be increased and overall productivity of the substrates can be increased. Since a substrate transfer apparatus to simultaneously load and unload the substrate is provided, the process chamber is very easily implemented to process the plurality of substrates. Time for transferring substrates is reduced and as a result productivity increases. The area and width of the system are significantly reduced so that apparatus cost and installation cost can be minimized. Respective chambers for processing, aligning, and cooling the substrates are overlapped with each other so that a total bottom area of the substrate processing system can be reduced. Due to this, the clean room can be narrower than the conventional one and costs for the air-conditioning apparatus of the clean room can also be reduced. Moreover, since the traveling distance of the atmospheric pressure transfer robot for transferring the aligned substrates to a place for the process of the substrates or for transferring the processed substrates to the place for the cooling of the substrates is short and unnecessary operation such as a direction change does not need, time for the transfer of the substrates can be reduced and yield thereof can be increased.

The invention claimed is:

1. An apparatus for transferring substrates between a load lock chamber and a first process chamber and a second process chamber to process the substrates, the apparatus comprising:

- a driving unit to supply a rotational force;
 - at least one spindle connected to the driving unit;
 - a plurality of first swivel plate arms connected to the at least one spindle to unload processed substrates from the first process chamber to the load lock chamber and simultaneously load unprocessed substrates from the load lock chamber to the first process chamber; and
 - a plurality of second swivel plate arms connected to the at least one spindle to unload processed substrates from the second process chamber to the load lock chamber and simultaneously load unprocessed substrates from the load lock chamber to the second process chamber,
- wherein the plurality of first swivel plate arms and the plurality of second swivel plate arms each comprise an end effector, the end effector comprising:

30

a generally circular frame having a first end that connects to an end of each of the plurality of first swivel plate arms and to an end of each of the plurality of second swivel plate arms, and a second end that defines, in conjunction with the end of each of the plurality of first swivel plate arms and the end of each of the plurality of second swivel plate arms, an opening in the generally circular frame,

risers located on the generally circular frame, the risers to contact edges of a substrate received by the end effector, and

an entrance path defined by the generally circular frame, the entrance path to receive a transfer robot to add or remove the substrate from the end effector, wherein the entrance path defined by generally circular frame is different than the opening in the generally circular frame.

2. The apparatus for transferring substrates of claim 1, wherein the plurality of first swivel plate arms and the plurality of second swivel plate arms are separately mounted, and the at least one spindle includes at least two different spindles that rotate independently.

3. The apparatus for transferring substrates of claim 2, wherein the driving unit includes at least one driving unit to supply a rotational force through the at least two different spindles.

4. A substrate processing system comprising:

- a first process chamber having at least two substrate supporting tables located therein;
- a second process chamber having at least two substrate supporting tables located therein;
- a transfer chamber in which a substrate transfer apparatus is installed;
- a first substrate entrance formed between the first process chamber and the transfer chamber;
- a second substrate entrance formed between the second process chamber and the transfer chamber; and
- a third substrate entrance formed between the transfer chamber and a space exterior to the transfer chamber,

wherein the substrate transfer apparatus includes:

- a driving unit to supply a rotational force,
- at least one spindle connected to the driving unit,
- a plurality of first swivel plate arms connected to the at least one spindle to unload processed substrates from the first process chamber to the transfer chamber and simultaneously load unprocessed substrates from the transfer chamber to the first process chamber, and
- a plurality of second swivel plate arms connected to the at least one spindle to unload processed substrates from the second process chamber to the transfer chamber and simultaneously load unprocessed substrates from the transfer chamber to the second process chamber,

wherein the substrate transfer apparatus receives and transfers, through the third substrate entrance, the unprocessed and processed substrates from and to the space exterior to the transfer chamber, such that the unprocessed substrates are transferred to the first process chamber and the second process chamber and the processed substrates are simultaneously transferred from the first process chamber and the second process chamber to the space exterior to transfer chamber through the third substrate entrance, and

wherein the plurality of first swivel plate arms and the plurality of second swivel plate arms each comprises an end effector, the end effector comprising:

31

a generally circular frame having a first end that connects to an end of each of the plurality of first and second swivel plate arms and to an end of each of the plurality of second swivel plate arms, and a second end that defines, in conjunction with the end of each of the plurality of first swivel plate arms and the end of each of the plurality of second swivel plate arms, an opening in the generally circular frame,

risers located on the generally circular frame, the risers to contact edges of a substrate received by the end effector, and

an entrance path defined by the generally circular frame, the entrance path to receive a transfer robot to add or remove the substrate from the end effector, wherein the entrance path defined by generally circular frame is different than the opening in the generally circular frame.

5. The substrate processing system of claim 4, wherein the space exterior to the transfer chamber is a load lock chamber, and

the transfer robot is located in the load lock chamber and is an atmospheric pressure transfer robot to transfer the substrates under atmospheric pressure.

6. The substrate processing system of claim 4, further comprising:

a cooling chamber to cool the processed substrates discharged through the third substrate entrance.

7. The substrate processing system of claim 4, further comprising:

a fourth substrate entrance formed between the transfer chamber and a second load lock chamber exterior to the transfer chamber, wherein the substrate transfer apparatus receives the unprocessed substrates from the load lock chamber through the third substrate entrance and transfers the processed substrates to the second load lock chamber through the fourth substrate entrance.

8. The substrate processing system of claim 7, wherein an atmospheric pressure transfer robot to transfer the substrates under the atmospheric pressure is located in the second load lock chamber.

9. The substrate processing system of claim 8, further comprising:

a cooling chamber located in the second load lock chamber to cool the processed substrates.

10. An apparatus for transferring substrates between a load lock chamber and process chambers to process the substrates, the apparatus comprising:

transfer members located in a transfer chamber positioned between the load lock chamber and the process chambers;

wherein the transfer members are to:

transfer a plurality of unprocessed substrates from the load lock chamber to a standby position in the transfer chamber,

transfer the plurality of unprocessed substrates from the transfer chamber to upper sides of substrate supporting tables installed in the process chambers,

simultaneously transfer processed substrates from the upper sides of the substrate supporting tables to the standby position in the transfer chamber, and

transfer the processed substrates from the standby position to the load lock chamber; and

wherein each of the transfer members comprises:

a driving unit to supply a rotational force,

a first spindle and a second spindle each connected to the driving unit, and

32

a plurality of loading swivel plate arms connected to the first spindle to load the unprocessed substrates from the load lock chamber to corresponding substrate supporting tables,

a plurality of unloading swivel plate arms connected to the second spindle to unload the processed substrates from the corresponding substrate supporting tables to the load lock chamber, and

wherein the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms and the plurality of loading swivel plate arms each comprises an end effector, the end effector comprising:

a generally circular frame having a first end that connects to an end of each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and to an end of each of the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms, and a second end that defines, in conjunction with the end of each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and the end of each of the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms, an opening in the generally circular frame,

risers located on the generally circular frame, the risers to contact edges of a substrate received by the end effector, and

an entrance path defined by the generally circular frame, the entrance path to receive a transfer robot to add or remove the substrate from the end effector, wherein the entrance path defined by generally circular frame is different than the opening in the generally circular frame.

11. A substrate transfer apparatus installed in a transfer chamber, the substrate transfer apparatus to transfer substrates between a load lock chamber and process chambers to process the substrates, the substrate transfer apparatus comprising:

a plurality of spindles spaced apart from each other in the transfer chamber;

a driving unit to supply a driving force to the plurality of spindles; and

a loading swivel plate arm rotatably connected to each spindle, of the plurality of spindles, to load unprocessed substrates from the load lock chamber to a process chamber,

an unloading swivel plate arm rotatably connected to each spindles, of the plurality of spindles, to unload processed substrates from a process chamber to the load lock chamber; and

an end effector connected to each loading swivel plate arm and each unloading swivel plate arm, the end effector comprising:

a generally circular frame having a first end that connects to an end of each loading swivel plate arm and to an end of each unloading swivel plate arm, and a second end that defines, in conjunction with the end of each loading swivel plate arm and the end of each unloading swivel plate arm, an opening in the generally circular frame,

risers located on the generally circular frame, the risers to contact edges of a substrate received by the end effector, and

an entrance path defined by the generally circular frame, the entrance path to receive a transfer robot to add or remove the substrate from the end effector, wherein the entrance path defined by generally circular frame is different than the opening in the generally circular frame.

33

12. The substrate transfer apparatus of claim 11, wherein the loading swivel plate arm and the unloading swivel plate arm each comprises at least two rod-antenna type extensible swivel plate arms.

13. The substrate transfer apparatus of claim 12, wherein the loading swivel plate arm and the unloading swivel plate arm swivel toward corresponding substrate supporting tables located in the process chambers and the extensible rod-antenna type swivel plate arms are extended in a step-by-step manner, such that the end effectors are positioned at the upper sides of the substrate supporting tables.

14. A substrate processing system comprising:

a transfer chamber having a substrate transfer apparatus located therein, the substrate transfer apparatus including four transfer members spaced apart from each other in the transfer chamber

a first process chamber connected to a first side of the transfer chamber through a first entrance, the first process chamber having two substrate supporting tables located therein; and

a second process chamber connected to a second side the transfer chamber through a second entrance, the second process chamber having two substrate supporting tables located therein,

wherein each of the four transfer members comprises:

a driving unit to supply a rotational force,

a first spindle and a second spindle each connected to the driving unit,

a plurality of loading swivel plate arms connected to the first spindle to transfer the unprocessed substrates from the transfer chamber to the first process chamber and the second process chamber;

a plurality of unloading swivel plate arms connected to the second spindle to transfer processed substrates from the first process chamber and the second process chamber to the transfer chamber,

wherein each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms are movable to a folded position to transfer four unprocessed substrates from a location exterior to the transfer chamber to a standby position in the transfer chamber,

wherein each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms are movable to an unfolded position to transfer the four unprocessed substrates to upper sides of the two first substrate supporting tables and the two second substrate supporting tables

wherein each of the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms are movable to an unfolded position to simultaneously receive processed substrates from the upper sides of the two first substrate supporting tables and the two second substrate supporting tables,

wherein each of the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms are movable to a folded position to transfer the processed substrates to the standby position in the transfer chamber, and

wherein each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and unloading swivel plate arms comprises an end effector, the end effector comprising:

a generally circular frame having a first end that connects to an end of each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and an end of each of the unloading swivel plate arms, and a second end that defines, in conjunction with the end of each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and the end of each of the unloading swivel plate arms, an opening in the generally circular frame,

34

risers located on the generally circular frame, the rises to contact edges of a substrate received by the end effector, and

an entrance path defined by the generally circular frame, the entrance path to receive a transfer robot to add or remove the substrate from the end effector, wherein the entrance path defined by generally circular frame is different than the opening in the generally circular frame.

15. The substrate processing system of claim 14, wherein the location exterior to the transfer chamber comprises:

a load lock chamber connected to the transfer chamber through a third entrance, and

wherein the transfer robot is located in the load lock chamber and is an atmospheric pressure transfer robot to transfer the unprocessed and processed substrates between the transfer chamber and the load lock chamber under atmospheric pressure.

16. The substrate processing system of claim 15, further comprising:

a cooling chamber positioned in the load lock chamber to cool processed substrates discharged to the load lock chamber through the third substrate entrance.

17. A substrate processing system comprising:

a load lock chamber having an index installed in one side thereof, the index including a plurality of carriers installed therein; and

a plurality of processing groups disposed in another side of the load lock chamber and stacked in multi-layers, wherein a first process group, from among the plurality of process groups, comprises:

a first transfer chamber in which a first substrate transfer apparatus is installed,

a first process chamber connected to a first side of the first transfer chamber through a first entrance, the first process chamber having first substrate supporting tables located therein, and

a second process chamber connected to a second side of the first transfer chamber through a second entrance, the second process chamber having second substrate supporting tables located therein; and

wherein a second process group, from among the plurality of processing groups, comprises:

a second transfer chamber in which a second substrate transfer apparatus is installed,

a first aligning chamber connected to a first side of the second transfer chamber through a first entrance, the first aligning chamber having substrate aligners located therein, and

a second aligning chamber connected to a second side of the second transfer chamber through a second entrance, the second aligning chamber having substrate aligners located therein,

wherein the first substrate transfer apparatus and the second substrate transfer apparatus each comprises:

a driving unit to supply a rotational force; and

at least one spindle connected to the driving unit, and wherein each of the first process group and the second process group comprise:

a plurality of unloading swivel plate arms connected to the at least one spindle to transfer unprocessed substrates from the first process chamber and the second process chamber to the first transfer chamber, and

a plurality of unloading swivel plate arms connected to the at least one spindle to transfer the processed substrates from the first process chamber and the second process chamber to the first transfer chamber,

35

wherein each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and unloading swivel plate arms comprises an end effector, the end effector comprising:

a generally circular frame having a first end that connects to an end of each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and an end of each of the unloading swivel plate arms, and a second end that defines, in conjunction with the end of each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and the end of each of the unloading swivel plate arms, an opening in the generally circular frame,

risers located on the generally circular frame, the risers to contact edges of a substrate received by the end effector, and

an entrance path defined by the generally circular frame, the entrance path to receive a transfer robot to add or remove the substrate from the end effector, wherein the entrance path defined by generally circular frame is different than the opening in the generally circular frame.

18. The substrate processing system of claim 17, wherein each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms are movable to an unfolded position to simultaneously transfer unprocessed substrates from a standby position in the first transfer chamber to upper sides of the first substrate supporting tables and the second substrate supporting tables, and

wherein each of the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms are movable to a folded position to transfer processed substrates from the upper sides of the first substrate supporting tables and the second substrate supporting tables to the standby position in the first transfer chamber.

19. The substrate processing system of claim 17, wherein each of the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms movable to an unfolded position to simultaneously transfer unprocessed substrates from a standby position of the second transfer chamber to the substrate aligners installed in the first aligning chamber and the second aligning chamber, and

wherein each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms are movable to a folded position to transfer aligned substrates from the substrate aligners to the standby position in the second transfer chamber.

20. The substrate processing system of claim 17, wherein a third process group, of the plurality of processing groups, comprises:

a third transfer chamber in which a third substrate transfer apparatus is installed; and

a cooling chamber connected to a side of the third transfer chamber through a fourth entrance to cool at least one substrate.

21. The substrate processing system of claim 20, wherein the third substrate transfer apparatus comprises:

a driving unit to supply a rotational force;

at least one spindle connected to the driving unit; and

a plurality of swivel plate arms mounted to the spindle at different heights and to be positioned at corresponding positions in association with the spindle.

22. The substrate processing system of claim 17, wherein the plurality of loading swivel plate arms are to simultaneously receive unprocessed substrates from a standby position in the first transfer chamber, transfer the unprocessed substrates to the first substrate supporting tables and the second substrate supporting tables, and transfer the processed substrates to the standby position of the first transfer chamber.

36

23. The substrate processing system of claim 17, wherein each of the substrate aligners comprises:

a spin chuck to load a substrate;

a sensor to detect an alignment of the substrate loaded by the spin chuck; and

an elevator to adjust a height of the spin chuck according to heights of the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms and the plurality of loading swivel plate arms.

24. The substrate processing system of claim 17, wherein the transfer robot is an atmospheric pressure transfer robot located in the load lock chamber to transfer the substrates under the atmospheric pressure.

25. The substrate processing system of claim 17, wherein the transfer robot is located in the load lock chamber and comprises a double-armed atmospheric pressure transfer robot having the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms and loading swivel plate arms to simultaneously transfer a plurality of unprocessed substrates from the carriers and transfer the plurality of unprocessed substrates to the first transfer chamber or the second transfer chamber,

wherein each of the first transfer chamber and the second transfer chamber has a third substrate entrance, through which the plurality of unprocessed substrates from the load lock chamber enter and exit, the third entrance of the first transfer chamber being aligned with the third entrance of the second transfer chamber each other such that the transfer of the plurality of unprocessed substrates is enabled when the atmospheric pressure transfer robot is moved up and down.

26. The substrate processing system of claim 25, wherein the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and the plurality of loading swivel plate arms are separately mounted, and the at least one spindle includes at least two different spindles that rotate independently.

27. The substrate processing system of claim 26, wherein the driving unit includes at least one driving unit to supply a rotational force through the at least two different spindles.

28. A substrate processing system comprising at least one process group, the at least one process group comprising:

a first process chamber containing a first substrate supporting table;

a second process chamber containing a second substrate supporting table;

a transfer chamber in which a substrate transfer apparatus is installed;

a first substrate entrance formed between the transfer chamber and a space exterior to the transfer chamber;

a second substrate entrance formed between the first process chamber and the transfer chamber; and

a third substrate entrance formed between the second process chamber and the transfer chamber,

wherein the substrate transfer apparatus comprises:

a driving unit to supply a rotational force;

at least one spindle connected to the driving unit;

a plurality of loading swivel plate arms connected to the at least one spindle to transfer unprocessed substrates from the transfer chamber to at least one of the first process chamber or the second process chamber; and a plurality of unloading swivel plate arms connected to the at least one spindle to transfer the processed substrates from the at least one of the first process chamber or the second process chamber to the transfer chamber,

wherein the substrate transfer apparatus is to:

transfer the unprocessed and processed substrates between the transfer chamber and the space exterior to the transfer chamber through the first substrate entrance,

37

transfer the unprocessed substrates from the transfer chamber to the first process chamber through the second substrate entrance or to the second process chamber through the third substrate entrance,

simultaneously transfer the processed substrates from the first process chamber to the transfer chamber through the second substrate entrance or from the second process chamber through the third substrate entrance, and

transfer the processed substrates to the space exterior to the transfer chamber through the first substrate entrance, and

wherein each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms comprises an end effector, the end effector comprising:

a generally circular frame having a first end that connects to an end of each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and an end of each of the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms, and a second end that defines, in conjunction with the end of each of the plurality of loading swivel plate arms and the end of each of the plurality of unloading swivel plate arms, an opening in the generally circular frame,

38

risers located on the generally circular frame, the risers to contact edges of a substrate received by the end effector, and

an entrance path defined by the generally circular frame, the entrance path to receive a transfer robot to add or remove the substrate from the end effector, wherein the entrance path defined by generally circular frame is different than the opening in the generally circular frame.

29. The substrate processing system of claim **28**, further comprising:

a load lock chamber connected to the first substrate entrance, wherein the transfer robot is located in the load lock chamber, the transfer robot comprising an atmospheric pressure transfer robot to transfer the substrates under the atmospheric pressure.

30. The substrate processing system of claim **28**, wherein at least one of the first process chamber or the second process chamber has a cooling chamber located therein.

31. The substrate processing system of claim **28**, wherein at least one of the first process chamber or the second process chamber is an aligning chamber.

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